John "whom Jesus Loved."

Rev. J. Culross, D.D.

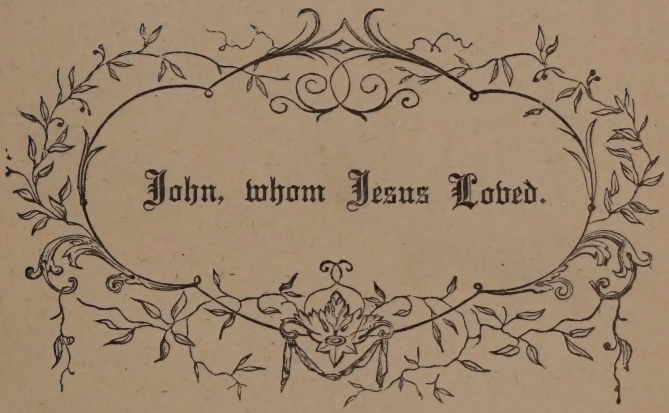
9.26.05.

Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Division BS2455

Section C96


John, whom Jesus Loved.

SEA OF GALILEE.

John, whom Jesus Loved.

BY

JAMES CULROSS, A.M., D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR, AND KNOCK;"
"JESUS SHOWING MERCY;" "JESUS REVEALING THE FATHER;"
"LAZARUS REVIVED;"
"'THY FIRST LOVE:' CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO EPHESUS."
ETC. ETC.

LONDON: MORGAN AND SCOTT,

(OFFICE OF "The Christian,")

12, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E.C.

And may be ordered of any Bookseller.

PREFACE.

"I AM the Vine; ye are the branches." These words of Jesus say that we are dependent on Him for our Christian being. They place our union to Him in a very remarkable light. It is not here—as in the Epistle to the Romans (xi. 17—24)—that we have been "*graffed*" unto Him. The branch is not "graffed" into the vine, but grows out of it. Even so, our believer-life is but the outgrowth (so to speak) of the Eternal Life. The life that was placed in the first Adam was lost in the Fall; the life that is in the last Adam is immortal and sure. And it is in Him as life is in the vine-root—which grows forth into living branches. Because there is a living vine-root, there *must* be branches; and Christ the Living One must have *His* branches also; and the endlessness of His life is security that ours shall be endless too.

We know the vine by its branches. It is in them that the fruit is put forth which shows the qualities

and power of the life. We know Christ by *His* branches. We know Him in His disciples, because in every one of them He liveth, and His fruit is found in them. In such a man as the Apostle John, we see Him more fully than in common saints; not merely by what he tells us—though that is much—but even more by what he *is*, in his new being.

To regard the Apostle thus is not to make him an object of hero-worship—as there are so many subtle and perilous temptations to do. This hero-worship is a fashion of our age, and grows in the same soil with envy and detraction. Man praises man, and God is robbed of His due. This, I believe, has not a little to do with the decay of true reverence among us, and the debility of faith. It tends also to divisions and alienations. We may not choose out even an Apostle for such worship. Of all saints, perhaps, the Apostle John would have shrunk from it the most sensitively, with the most earnest, *See thou do it not!* What he was he owed to Christ, and hence could not accept glory for himself. Hence, also, while shrinking from hero-worship, he would have stood forth anywhere—albeit in a pillory—if he might thereby show the glory of his Lord and Saviour more fully. To contribute to the exhibition of *this* glory is the design of the things which follow. In so far as they are according to the truth, may the Lord bless them.

CONTENTS.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

PAGE

Manifestation of the Son of God. The Chosen Witnesses. What they had in Common. Their Individuality. Breadth of Fitness 1

II.—THE MAN.

The Home of John. His General Character. Son of Thunder. "The Disciple whom Jesus Loved." Greatness of Mind. Symbolized by the Eagle. An Example of Christ's New-fashioning Power. John's Fitness for being a Witness ... 7

III.—THE COMPANION OF JESUS.

The Forerunner. John's First Meeting with Jesus. With Him in Galilee, Jerusalem, and Samaria. "Follow Me." The Apostolic Appointment. His New Name. Jairus' Daughter. The Transfiguration. "Who is Greatest?" "Shall we call down Fire from Heaven?" "Thy Right Hand and Thy Left." Gethsemane and the Closing Scenes. The Risen Life. 27

IV.—THE APOSTLE.

The Commission. John, the Associate of Peter in Jerusalem and Samaria. Disappears from the History. Ephesus. Patmos. Close of his Life. 64

V.—THE SEER.

PAGE

The Book of Revelation. Difference between it and John's other Writings. The Vision of the Lord. Patmos. The Seven Churches. The Apocalypse the one Prophetic Book of the New Testament. Schools of Interpretation. Structure of the Book 84

VI.—THE EVANGELIST.

The Gospel of John. The battle-field of the New Testament. Relation to the other Gospels. Characteristics and Contents. How it impresses different Men. The Prologue. Exposition of the Prologue 98

VII.—THE FATHER AND HIS LITTLE CHILDREN.

John's Epistles. Condition of those to whom the First Epistle was sent. "Knowledge." Opinions as to the Person of the Redeemer. The Epistle itself. The "Elect Lady" and the Second Epistle. Gaius and the Third Epistle ... 145

VIII.—THE THEOLOGIAN.

The New Testament Writings. Different Modes of presenting the same Truth. John's Starting-point. The Word. Manifested humanly. Sphere of the Manifestation. Its Character and Purpose. The Holy Spirit. "For Judgment am I come." Sinning and not Sinning. Faith and Unbelief. Standing of Believers. The Future. ... 176

IX.—HIS INFLUENCE.

On Christian Thought. Christian Philosophy. The Origin and Nurture of the New Life. Faith, Love, Hope. The Early Ages. The Dark Ages. Mysticism. The Reformation. The Present. Influence of John's Personality. Results of Studying his Writings... 208

APPENDIX.

Legends, Traditions, etc. 229

JOHN, WHOM JESUS LOVED.

I.

Introductory.

MANIFESTATION OF THE SON OF GOD. THE CHOSEN WITNESSES. WHAT THEY HAD IN COMMON. THEIR INDIVIDUALITY. BREADTH OF FITNESS.

THE central fact of History is the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh. Even those who deny His higher nature must admit that His appearing is the new-beginning of the ages, and has been fruitful of the richest consequences to mankind. His brief sojourn on earth, as narrated in the four Gospels, exhibits a perfect love, combined with perfect truth and righteousness, which men had not even imaged to themselves as possible.

In His presence sin becomes exceeding sinful, and holiness exceeding lovely. He is the faultless Type of humanity; the "Express Image," in our nature, of the invisible God; the Revealer of heavenly things; the Redeemer from evil; the Founder and King of a new creation; the Dispenser of the Holy Spirit; the Life from

whom all life flows, and by whom it is sustained. The Secret of nature, providence, and grace, is unlocked in Him, "for whom are all things." It is a mighty step taken when I exchange my barren abstraction of "Deity" for the I AM of the Old Testament; it is a still mightier when I see the I AM livingly in Jesus Christ, the blessed Saviour.

During His brief and lowly transit through mortal life, glorifying the Father and bearing the burden of our salvation, comparatively few eyes were drawn to Him; and even of these few, many "seeing, saw not:" the place He occupied was that of a Stranger, whom the world did not know (John i. 10; xii. 37; xvi. 3; 1 John iii. 1). That all the ends of the earth, and all ages, might receive tidings of Him, He chose certain followers, and received them into the inner circle of communion, men who should hear His words, see His works, witness the disclosures of His glory, become penetrated with His light, receive the impress of His personality; and who in turn should declare, with human lips, what they had seen and heard, and show, in human life, the Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them: an infinitely more gracious thing for us in these after-ages, more suited to the needs both of our intellect and heart, than if He had merely left behind Him some stereotyped book setting forth in naked abstractness what we must believe and do.

Because He Himself was so truly and deeply *the Wonderful*, it was necessary that His witnesses, who were also to be the future organs of His Spirit, should be men of broadly varied nature; not copies of one another, like images of clay cast in kindred mould—God's moulds are numberless—but differing in mental constitution, experience, spiritual affinities, and faculty of vision. No single man could take in His full image, or apprehend, in its completeness and unity and infinite reaches of application, the truth revealed

in Him ; and therefore the "chosen witnesses" were many and many-natured. And farther, as no single flower, receiving from the sun and giving back in brightness and beauty what it receives, can show forth, by its dyes, all that is in the sunlight—as it takes the whole bloom of the year to do so, from the first snowdrop that pierces the dark earth to the latest flower of autumn—so He needed them all for the adequate forth-telling of His holy personality. The fact of inspiration does not render their testimony one whit the less accurate expression of their personal knowledge and experience.

We naturally look for what may be called *spiritual congruity* between the truths which God reveals and the instrument through which the revelation is made. The messenger is not a mere speaking-trumpet, filled with the breath of God. Rather, a man of like passions with ourselves, with his individual mental endowments, his moral susceptibilities, his special experience and faculties of utterance, is made the living, throbbing vehicle of revelation.*

Taking the band that followed Jesus as a whole, we find in them (speaking reverently) great breadth of fitness for the Lord's purposes. He who chooseth the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, ever chooseth in wisdom that is heavenly and perfect. Certain elements of fitness they had in common. With one exception, they were Galileans, marked by native robustness and a certain "*ingenium perfervidum.*" They were all drawn from the ranks of practical life, or (to use an Old Testament phrase) were "chosen out of the people"—as so many of the "worthies" of Israel had been before them. They were

* *E.g.*, to use a very homely illustration, for Balaam's ass to have uttered some spiritual truth would have been out of keeping with God's whole way of communicating with man, and would have discredited the narrative.

no dreamers or visionaries, but men accustomed to the use of their senses and reason in every-day affairs. They stood at as great a remove as can easily be conceived from the enthusiasm of the flesh and the subtleties of the schools. They were men of singular sobriety of mind. If they were "unlearned and ignorant," it was not in the sense of being uneducated—particularly in spiritual things—but merely in the sense of being untrained in rabbinic discipline and lore—unversed in the artificial culture of the time. As witnesses of the Divine manifestation in Christ Jesus, this was no loss to them, but rather gain; for there is a wisdom that blinds and causes to stumble. Their want of "learning" left them more free and unsophisticated; in a healthier condition mentally; with no ingenious theories to which facts must adapt themselves; with simpler and purer eyesight.

The very nature of the employment which most of them had pursued—that of fishermen—tended to make them at once observant, cautious, hardy, and patient. They were also removed to a considerable extent, both by place and manner of life, from Pharisaic and Sadducean influences; and to that extent were better prepared to welcome the Consolation of Israel. Humanly speaking, no class in the land could have furnished men with larger fitness for being the companions and witnesses of the Son of God.

Besides what they had in common, there were also among them the strongest and most distinctly-marked peculiarities, fitting them to discern different aspects and elements of the Lord's manifestation of Himself, and to fulfil different forms of service; just as in the Church to-day we see various graces which together present a fuller collective image of the Lord than is found in any single saint, or as we hear various notes in her song which together make up a full chord.

I need but name Peter—rapid, sanguine, practical, penetrated with the flame of zeal and love; James and John, the sons of thunder; the other James, surnamed "the Just," to whom the helm of the Church in Jerusalem was first committed, with his bold ethical nature, judicial intellect, and faculty of government; Thomas, cautious and scrutinizing, slow to take things on trust, demanding the full satisfaction of his reason, the very last man to be imposed upon by his likings; Matthew the publican, the writer of the Gospel that bears his name, sublimely content to be hidden behind his Lord; Simon the zealot, bearing his publican-brother pleasant company; Nathanael, the Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile; Judas, the brother of James, whose Epistle startles like an alarm-bell rung at midnight; and even Judas Iscariot, with his plausible face, and keen, calculating eye, ready to detect fault in Jesus, had fault existed—the devil's representative beside the Holy One—haunting Him like a black shadow, and finally bearing testimony of supremest value to the "Innocent Blood," albeit the testimony of despair.*

Some of the twelve indeed are names to us, and nothing more; but judging from those of them whom

* In reference to the apostleship of Judas, certain questions are eagerly pressed. If Jesus knew all men, was He deceived in Judas? If not deceived, why did He call him? When He discovered his true character, why did He not dismiss him? In view of such questions, it is to be noted (1) that he attached himself to Jesus as a disciple before he was made an apostle; and for his profession of discipleship he is himself responsible; (2) that, being a professed disciple, Jesus appointed him to be one of the twelve; (3) that Jesus, on whom no mock-faith could impose, knew what manner of man he was; and (4) that his testimony in favour of Jesus, in its own place, and within its own limits, is as valuable as that of any. Had there been fault in Jesus, he was the man to find it out and tell it; indeed there was the strongest possible reason why he should have told it, to quiet his own conscience and justify his conduct. Not one of the twelve has borne more distinct testimony to the truth—vital to the Christian system—that Jesus is the Sinless One.

we know, we are justified in regarding the apostolic band as embracing a wide variety (even to antithesis) of constitutional character, each man from his peculiar standing-point, sympathies, faculties of mind, and spiritual affinities, finding in Jesus something different from what the others found, and expressing it in his testimony and life.

In the Lord Himself, as has been often pointed out, all was comprehended in a holy unity; but as the ray of light divides itself into its colours, so that one light which beamed forth from Him fell in variously modified splendour into the hearts of the Apostles. Thus it became possible that not only a few men, but all, according to their wants and capacities, should be partakers of the knowledge of Christ; the very diversities among the twelve giving breadth and comprehensiveness to their testimony.

II.

The Man.

THE HOME OF JOHN. HIS GENERAL CHARACTER. SON OF THUNDER. "THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED." GREATNESS OF MIND. SYMBOLIZED BY THE EAGLE. AN EXAMPLE OF CHRIST'S NEW-FASHIONING POWER. JOHN'S FITNESS FOR BEING A WITNESS.

OF the band that followed Jesus the Apostle John was one of the earliest and most notable members. His individuality is as strongly marked as that of any. This individuality, sanctified and unfolded by Divine grace, fitted him to be a witness of certain aspects of the Lord's life, to receive and treasure up a certain class of His sayings, and to elucidate certain special truths of the profoundest order, beyond any other of the twelve.

We must endeavour, in the outset, to know *the man*. This is as important in some respects as to know the language in which he wrote his testimony. In calling him to be a follower, and in making him an organ of His Spirit, the Lord did not destroy or suppress his individuality, but used it ; as, if one should send a message by a lisping child, the lisp will be heard in the delivery of the message ; or as, when Moses' face shone, or Stephen wore as it had been the face of an angel, the men were still them-

selves.* This is the Lord's way with His own throughout. While they are all taken up with Him into heavenly places, there is no dead monotony of character produced; each wears a grace peculiar to himself; each is Christ-like after his own order.

So with this man. It is indeed no longer he that lives, but Christ that liveth in him. The Christ-life pours through all the channels and works all the machinery of his being. But he has not ceased to be John. The original texture of his nature abides. He has lost nothing; rather he is become more simply, truly, characteristically, profoundly, essentially *himself*—himself, purified and exalted. The record he gives us of the Word of Life, being the record of what entered the most deeply into his own heart, and was most his own joy, will be correspondingly different from that given by any other.

His form will stand out more distinctly to our eye if we call up the outward circumstances. When we first meet him, he is young; perhaps not far beyond his twentieth year,—if indeed he has reached it. He belongs to the fishing village of Bethsaida, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near where the swift and milk-like Jordan enters. The whole region wears a quiet beauty of its own,† and must have been still more charming in New Testament days. The sea itself—twelve full miles in length by nearly seven in breadth, formed by the widening of the river, and lying almost seven hundred feet below the level of the

---

* "God, when He makes the prophet, does not unmake the man."—*Locke.*

† "I have an ancient love for the mere features of a lake, and so, forgetting all else when I reached the summit, I looked away eagerly to the eastward. There she lay, the Sea of Galilee. Less stern than Wastwater—less fair than gentle Windermere—she had still the winning ways of an English lake; she caught from the smiling heavens unceasing light and changeful phases of beauty."—*Eothen.*

Mediterranean*—is a beautiful expanse of clear, shining water, transparent to considerable depths. Viewed from different points and at different times, it is now a deep blue mirror among the mountains, now lustrous and glittering in the sunbeams like molten silver, now a sea of glass, as it were mingled with fire, now varying under every changeful gleam like an opal set in emeralds.

In shape it is rather harp-like† than oval. The beach is in parts pebbly,‡ in parts sandy, and of pearly whiteness, owing to the presence of innumerable fine shells; elsewhere it is covered with big, rough stones. The silent shore behind, stretching out here and there into small, irregular plains, is belted with a jungle of oleanders and other shrubs and bushes, and contains some rich corn-lands. On the eastern side the treeless hills, scarred with ravines, have a desolate and mournful look.§ Those on the west swell up pleasantly from the shore; and if they are not bold and romantic, neither are they tame. The snowy top of the Hermon range rises majestically in the distance like a mighty guardian of the northern frontier.

Orange, citron, myrtle, and date-trees, are still to be found; and the wandering foot crushes fragrance from many a lowly herb. Birds of bright plumage frequent the shores, and over the waters of the lake many sea-fowl dip the wing. Visitors tell how, as night gives place to morning, the sudden note of a lark will ring out, silvery and joyous, as if from the very midst of the stars, waking a con-

---

* 682·554, Lieut. Kitchener's measurement; Palestine Exploration Survey.

† Hence called "Chinnereth"—from the Hebrew word for "lyre" or "harp."

‡ Flint, jasper, chalcedony, and agate.

§ "The eastern shore is destitute of verdure, and consists of a bright-red naked precipice, whose picturesquely solemn expression enhances the splendour of the blue mirror."—*Tischendorf.*

cert all along the shore and back to the hills. The sunrise and sunset tints, opal and purple, are wonderful; and so are the contrasts of light and deep shadow. "God," said the Rabbins, "loved that sea beyond all other seas." All around there now broods (to use Gibbon's phrase) "a mournful and solitary silence." But in New Testament days the stir of busy life was everywhere. Villages nestled in the green valleys, were perched upon the heights, lay scattered along the shores; everywhere "great multitudes of people" might readily be gathered together.

Though mingled with lower and impurer elements, a "deathless trust" in the Invisible and the Future still survived in this secluded region, at least in some lowly, God-taught hearts; and great spiritual ideas struggled amidst narrowness and darkness.

It was here that the youth of the Apostle John was spent. His father, Zebedee, was a fisherman, with boats of his own, employing hired servants. His mother, Salome, was one of the Galilean women who followed Jesus, and ministered to Him of their substance. The family seem to have lived in comfort, if not in comparative wealth. There is ground for surmising some bond of connection—possibly some tie of blood—with the mother of Jesus; it may be that Salome was Mary's sister.* I picture to myself a pious and happy Hebrew home, a dwelling of the righteous, wherein

* It is not by express statement, but by a comparison of passages, that Salome is known as the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John. By a similar comparison of passages it is inferred as not improbable that Salome was the sister of Mary. The Evangelists Matthew and Mark show us Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—these four—standing near the cross of Jesus. John gives us Mary the mother of Jesus, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Had Mary the mother of Jesus a sister also called Mary? If not, who is this unnamed woman, "His mother's sister"? Is it not Salome? (See Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40; John xix. 25.)

was daily heard the melody of joy and health—the inmates united both by natural affection and holy bonds of spirit, —the mother a woman who knew how to nurture her greatly-gifted sons.

School-days being ended, the lads are employed with their father on the sea. A fisherman's life is somewhat silent, fitted to nurture habits of thoughtfulness, independence, and patience; and such a life they are inured to from their boyhood. Every year after the age of twelve, they go up to Jerusalem for the great festivals, before and after harvest and after the vintage, carrying offerings with them to present before the Lord, and bringing back thoughts, and yearnings, and perplexities, and musings, kindled by what they heard and saw on their visits.

Their education would be of the simplest kind. Much of it would go on under the midnight sky and the stars, as they lay out all night on the sea in their fishing boats. The law, the history of Israel, the prophecies, the wondrous Psalms of David, form the literature in which their minds are steeped. It is a time of strange and wistful expectation, even beyond the limits of the chosen people, with powerful and deep-reaching though mysterious influences for all "men of desires;" for the Desire of all nations is at hand, and the God-inspired yearnings of ages are about to be met.

To most of us—for long, if not all our lives—the Apostle John dwells apart, in a dim, solemn region of mystery; and his figure looms forth faint and indistinct, as through a haze. He seems to look out upon us with gentle, dreamy eyes—a man of meditative calmness and repose, intensely intuitional, speaking in words of childlike, mystic simpleness, whose drift and scope baffle our logical methods to apprehend. With a kind of vague intention we are content to call him "the Apostle of Love," while his meaning floats before us in twilight and distance.

As our life in God deepens, we begin to perceive that, while the image of the Lord mirrors itself in him, as the sky mirrors itself in the depths of the Galilean sea, he is no mere passive and idle recipient of light, no mere reflecting surface, but a great, loving, deeply-spiritual soul, all aglow with adoration, and enthusiasm, and delight, and ever-living wonder, absorbed with the Lord, and resting in the calm assurance of His favour. As when one gazes with speculative eye into the star-lit azure, piercing far into its deep immensity, so (spiritually) does this man gaze into the depths of Christ, with the gaze of love.

As he appears before us ultimately in his writings, he exhibits no signs of doubt and conflict and struggle, of suspicion or cloudings of fear; these (if they ever were) lie behind him: "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

His language is extremely simple. He does not dispute or reason: he "shows," "testifies," "bears witness," "declares what he has seen and heard;" in short, decisive sentences that bear in their very brevity "the stamp of grandeur."

There is nothing obscure in his thoughts; while fathomlessly deep, they are always crystal-clear and untroubled. It is their clear depth that at once charms, fascinates, and baffles us.

Like all men of true, powerful, and loving nature—yea, like the Lamb Himself—he is capable of vehement and burning anger, as when volcanic fires burst through the rich and fertile slopes of Vesuvius or Etna. This characteristic shows itself—very mistakenly indeed, and so as to need rebuke—in his proposal to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan village that would not receive Jesus. It shows itself also—so as *not* to need rebuke—very largely throughout his writings, breathing, as has been remarked, through the most quiet speech. Nowhere else, save from

the lips of Incarnate Mercy, do we find such awful words launched against sin: all the more terrible that they are so very calm, and so evidently proceed from a tender and loving heart.

Because he speaks so much of love, he has frequently been pictured as one of those shrinking and yielding natures, deficient in nerve and stamina, unfit for the battle-strife, that are left at home to comfort the women and children; whereas, in reality, though gentle as a child, he carries in his bosom the germ of all strength and heroism; and the volume and force of his being are as remarkable as its quality.

He is not in the least sentimental. Nowhere does he exhibit trace or taint of that false "liberality" which bids truth and lie shake hands and be friends, or judicially binds them over to keep the peace; far less of that "philosophic breadth" which places Jesus Christ, Zoroaster, Sakya-Mouni, Mahomet (and why not by-and-by Joseph Smith?) in the same Pantheon. He is full of the grand intolerance of love; incapable of compromise or truce with falsehood, however mighty or loftily throned.* If a man come and bring not the doctrine of Christ, whosoever biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.† (2 John 10, 11.)

---

* There *is* a legitimate place for compromise, but it is not the realm of truth. Take an illustration which keeps clear of all theological complication. One man says, *Five times six are thirty.* Another says, *Five times six are twenty-eight.* Our liberal friend steps forward, and says, *Come now, don't fight about it; you must love one another; split the difference, and say, Five times six are twenty-nine.* Even in arithmetical discussions, men should show a right spirit, and not be overbearing or selfish or bitter; they are all the likelier to arrive at truth in this way: but compromise is no step toward truth—does not even lie on the road to it at all.

† "The vague cloudy men are always talking against intolerance. Why, our very calling is to be intolerant; intolerant of proved error and known sin. The evil is, that we are not intolerant enough; though, at the same time, we are not benevolent enough. A man however must have a clear eye and a large heart, before he has a right to be intolerant, either

He never puts himself forward in the sight of others, challenging observation, but yet is ever found by his Master's side in the hour of danger, quietly, and as of course; one of those who willingly offered themselves, and who did not turn back in the day of battle.

Thus, on the night of betrayal, after the first alarm and forsaking, he closely follows Jesus from the garden, goes in along with Him to the place of trial and judgment, and never for a moment falls away from Him or flinches. Peter too follows, but afar off, and takes his place with the officers and servants, as if he belonged to their company; and in that "afar off" lay his weakness and danger. John goes in "with" Jesus, quietly, and as a simple matter of course; and in this very cleaving to the Lord lay his safety.

Again, at the crucifixion, he held his station near the cross of his Master all day, a witness of His dreadful sufferings; exhibiting that rarest form of courage, which so few even of strong men are capable of—the courage to stand still and look upon the sufferings of a beloved friend, protracted and intensifying from hour to hour, which we can do nothing whatever to relieve. Ah, it takes courage of the loftiest order for *that!*

In the list of the Twelve Apostles, we read that Jesus surnamed John a "*Son of Thunder.*" Granted the native force—the passion—that lay at the basis of his character, the name does not mark something that grace was to eradicate; it is his new and true name, given by the Discerner of hearts; even as the name Peter, *Man of Rock*, is the new and true name given to Simon the son of Jonas.

---

towards concrete error or concrete sin."—*Colloquia Peripatetica: Dr. John Duncan.*

"Thou knowest the serpent cunning of this liberal spirit. It is killing our children; it has already slain its tens of thousands: this city is sick unto death, and dying of the mortal wounds which she hath received from it."—*Edward Irving.*

In the light of the after-history, it may appear to some that the name is scarcely appropriate. So calm as he is, so gentle, so loving—

> "The human-hearted man we loved"—

he is about the last whom we would liken to thunder: we think rather of the still small voice that speaks from the hush when the tempest has ceased. The incongruity, however, springs from a misapprehension on our part of the meaning and suggestion of the name. It does not point to human vehemence, or anything that partakes of the "wrath of man;" what wrath there is, is like that of Him who wept over Jerusalem, which is infinitely awful by reason of being "the wrath of *the Lamb*." In the Old Testament, by which the name must be interpreted, the thunder is the voice of Jehovah,* pealing amidst solemn darkness from the sky, abrupt, crashing, following no rhythmical laws for the human ear, with mystic intimations for the conscience, the transient

---

* It is the voice of God, not by some superstitious misinterpretation which modern science abolishes, but as all nature is a medium for conveying Divine meanings and monitions to the human heart. The hearing depends on the particular ear. To him who is in sympathy with heaven, every natural sound has some vibration within the breast; as, to the unsealed eye,—

> "Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God."

I give the following fragment of child-experience in illustration of this point. In a small country village, a young boy was left at home one Sabbath morning, with strict charge from his parents to avoid the company of some rude and bad children in the neighbourhood. These children sought him out however, and succeeded in enticing him to go with them and join in their amusements. They found their way together to a small reedy lake about half a mile off, surrounded by larches and dark firs, with water lilies and many small silver-budded flowers brightening its surface. It was a warm summer day, and they had played some time, when a strange silence fell ominously around, the lake grew inky black, and all of a sudden a peal of thunder broke and rattled overhead. It was the voice of the living God to the young boy. It told his conscience of his sin, as plainly as if in articulate words. Full of anguish and terror, he ran home, and could not stay his

revelation of majestic and eternal power. In some sense John represents this "voice of the Lord." (Job xxxvii. 1—5; Psalm xxix.)

It is not the mere loudness of the sound that is to be thought of—the noise of an empty waggon passing over the stony street may be louder: it is the soul-awakening power, the solemn majesty. From the bosom of the cloud the flash darts forth, swift, bright, intense, resistless; followed by the voice which appeals to the soul, finding her in her most secret chambers. This is what I think of when John is called a son of thunder; and I find the name justified both in his personality and in the light and power of his writings.* Personally he is no weak and shallow nature, deficient in force, straitened of understanding, concerning himself with pious trivialities, talking about love (the most sovereign thing in the universe) in a sweet and feeble monotone; he is powerful, grand, and energetic. The merely passionate man is borne away by impulses of the flesh; his urgencies are the feverish urgencies of the flesh. This "Son of Thunder" has his inspiration from heaven. His thought comes to us sudden, unexpected, bright as a flash of lightning; he speaks to us in a voice having no sign of the perturbations of earthly passion in it, that seems to come with a sovereign tone, from the upper sky, startling souls that are held in a "dead sleep," and oft-times melting down as into glad echoes.

---

sobbing, till, with his cheek leaning against his mother's bosom, he confessed his fault and sought forgiveness. The incident may serve to show how God can speak to consciences by His thunder, even in the nineteenth century, when so many intellects, misreading the glorious teachings of science, incline towards the cold conclusion, "*Here's law! Where's God?*"

* "Cujus vita fulgor, ejus verba tonitrua." Take the opening paragraph of his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word:" three men so different as Chrysostom, Augustine, and Bengel remark, "Hear how he thunders!" "John has opened his words as it were with a burst of thunder!" "This is the thunder brought down to us by a son of thunder!"

I cannot altogether agree with the often quoted representation of Chrysostom, "He has filled the whole earth with his voice, not by its mighty reverberations, but by the Divine grace which dwelt upon his lips. That which is most admirable is, that this great voice is neither harsh nor violent, but soft and melting as harmonious music." It seems to me there are as awful, thunder-like things in John, as awfully said, stopping the very beat of the hearer's heart, as anywhere in Scripture.

The name that we oftenest call him by, is "*the disciple whom Jesus loved.*" One would rather be known thus than even as Enoch, who "walked with God." If "Son of Thunder" is a magnificent name, this is inexpressibly winsome. We picture him to ourselves in the attitude in which the Evangelists represent him at the last supper, seated nearest the Lord, and leaning on His bosom, enjoying His closest intimacies. It does not appear that either Jesus or any of the disciples made use of this name; it is not found in any of the other Gospels; it is the name which *he himself assumes.* It does not occur for the first time until the very close of the Lord's ministry, on the evening of the betrayal; when he has occasion to refer to himself earlier, he is merely "another disciple."

To understand the name, we must know something of the love of Jesus Himself. Just as He hungered and thirsted, and was weary, and sorrowed, and wept, and marvelled, and rejoiced—so He loved; with a love as real as our own. Like all love that is true and deep, it had not only its tenderness and clemency, but also its graver looks, and faithful wounds, and far-purposed severities; its summons to self-denial and cross-bearing and forsaking of all that a man hath; its grand "*Follow Me,*" as it went forward to its sacrifice; yea, "as many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Among the little band of the disciples, He walked as the

Elder Brother. He never sided with their sin, nor passed it lightly by because it was in *them*; He rejoiced in their holiness; He bare their burdens; He restored them in the spirit of meekness; He shrank from no suffering in their behalf; He "prevented" them with the blessings of goodness; He girded Himself as a servant to wash their feet; He summoned them to dangers, yea, sent them forth as sheep into the midst of wolves.

One special and crowning quality His love had—that of constancy. Human love faileth; it finds flaws in its object, and is disenchanted; it meets ingratitude, and is soured; it decays through absence and distance; the world frowns, and it falls off from our side; a wind comes from the wilderness, and blows it out. But the love of Jesus was faithful and constant; many waters could not quench it, and no floods drown it. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

The love of Jesus toward His disciples was not a kind of vague benevolence, smiling alike on all: it had discrimination; and His heart went out specially to John. The rest of the twelve were no losers by this, for in truly and ardently loving *one* friend, I have not the less of love to give to others, but the more. A heart does not, as if it were a cup, contain just so much of love, which must be divided into shares, each becoming smaller as they are multiplied—and something always spilt in the dividing. Every elder brother knows that the true love of one is at once an education and a security for more deeply loving all. The love of Jesus toward John was more than "common friendship," such as grew "wild" in human society; it was friendship in its most exalted form. What it did for him, what joy it brought with it, what it was to him as a memory, we must ourselves taste the love in order that we may understand. I do not think that we are warranted to resolve

it into a case of sovereignty of which no account can be given; far less of capricious favouritism. We must look for those qualities and characteristics whereon the love of the Son of God rested; for, as human love is justified by the qualities, real or supposed, of our friend—as John himself loved the elect lady and her children, for the truth's sake which dwelt in them—so here.

These qualities are nowhere catalogued in a formal way, and we are left to discover them from what we know of the Lord Himself. They must have been qualities in which He could take delight, such as the tender and delicate sensibility of the Apostle's nature, his profound and pure affectionateness, his childlike simplicity, as if you looked through crystal windows into his soul, the deep truthfulness of his spirit, his ultimate gentleness and holiness, his reverence, his heroic faith and strength of character, his capacity for meeting and returning the love of which he was the object with undivided heart, and the grand sea-like largeness of his nature that could take in sublimest vision disclosed to him.

It is nothing against this that these qualities were of Divine creation in him, ripening through his intercourse with the Holy One. This is fully true; the very love that was shown him made him lovable; beholding the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, he was changed into His likeness; he could say as fervently as the Apostle Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am:" but none the less was his lovableness real and attractive to the heart of Jesus. Just as the painter who expresses on canvas some vision that has risen up before his inner eye,—or as the musician who hears in his soul some grand piece of music, like a bar or two of the

"Undisturbèd song of pure concent,"*

* "AT A SOLEMN MUSICK."—*Milton.*

and sings it forth with his own voice, and in his own hearing only,—has delight in it altogether apart from the thought of its being his own creation, so could Jesus love this man, although the lovableness was due to Himself.

The fact that it is John himself who uses the name, as he does again and again in his Gospel, brings into view his beautiful and childlike humility. A self-conscious man never would have ventured to do it, lest he should be charged with claiming distinction and honour for himself above his fellow-disciples. With finest lowliness of mind, he utters no disclaimer of merit—makes no formal protestation of unworthiness that such love should have been his—does not feel it necessary to do so. To my mind, the humility of fearlessly using the name is as touching as when the Apostle Paul calls himself "less than the least of all saints," or remembers how he was of sinners the "chief." The glory of his beloved Lord lighted up and beautified the countenance of John, as well as penetrated his soul; and he thought no more about it than a child unconscious of the grace of its own movements or the lustre of its eye, or as when Moses "wist not that the skin of his face shone." All he thought of was the blissfulness of being loved with a love so pure and wonderful.

Another aspect of the man is seen in the request preferred by his mother Salome, but acquiesced in by himself, that he and his brother might sit, the one on the Lord's right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom. With something of heartless pertinacity, commentators ground upon this request accusations which they fail to prove, and oftener reveal their own low thoughts than enter into the spirit of the two disciples. As the story is told in the Gospels, I do not read "selfish ambition" in it, nor "immense egotism," nor a "proud contempt of others," nor a "proof of the weakness and wickedness of human

nature," nor a violation by "that woman" and her sons of the primary conditions of brotherhood. On the contrary, I read John's faith in Jesus as the "King most wonderful," his love to Him, his high-hearted fortitude, and desire for the glory that He alone gives.

We wrong the man by detaching his request from its historical connection, and inventing a connection of our own for it. It is like the buying of land at full price in Rome, when the city was in the power of an enemy. The Lord had just foretold, in vivid and awful terms, His approaching sufferings—how He should be condemned, mocked, scourged, spit upon, crucified, and the third day should rise again. No words could have been plainer. It is at this moment, in connection with this announcement, and not knowing what the "rising" on the third day might mean, that the brothers ask places at His right hand and His left, in His glory.

What if they remember His large and varied teaching about exaltation in the kingdom of heaven? What if they understand, however dimly, that the greatest greatness is that which can bear to be despised and rejected of men—that the chiefest power is that of suffering love? What if they understand, however dimly, that all greatness under Him is held in like manner—that all power under Him is like-conditioned? What if their desire on this occasion has been quickened into energy by His very prediction of the cross, and is kin to that of Paul, "that I may know . . . . the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead"? When it is put to them, they hold themselves prepared to suffer with Him—to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, sharing His sufferings of both kinds, inward and outward. It is true they knew not what was involved in their request, and the

means of its accomplishment, and the Lord tells them so—who knows all that lies in his own prayers?—but the Lord reads their sincerity of heart, and accepts them, and they shall learn afterwards, in good time, how deep and serious their word was.

It is noticeable that while Jesus explains that places in glory are given by the Father to those for whom they are "prepared," He does not blame the ambition of the brothers, but rather their ignorance. I am far from saying that unworthier thoughts were not present in their minds; I cannot justify them; yet neither can I join in the sweeping assertions which ascribe to them a mere selfish and vulgar ambition, as if they were trying to drag down others from their seats and to mount in their stead.* I do not think they could have brought *that*, in the manner they did, under the eye of the meek and lowly One. Ambition there is; but I would venture to call it noble, though as yet untaught in the highest truth: not that soiled and unholy thing, the selfish lust of power or of human admiration—the thirst of fame, which is well nigh as base as the thirst of gold; but that *greatness of mind*, princely and heroic, which the Lord Himself creates, and to which He makes appeal, as when He promises His apostles to sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel—when He tells that the faithful servant shall have dominion over many things—or when He says, "If any man serve Me, *him will My Father honour.*"

We shall not know the Apostle John till we recognize his "high humility," his noble ambition to be great, seated by the side of the suffering King in His glory. Were we more Christlike, we should be able to enter more sympathetically into this aspect of his Christianhood. The spirit

* "It may be that an action displeases us, which would please us if we knew its true aim and whole extent."—*Letter of Meta Klopstock.*

of simple contentment with lowly things is of Christ's giving (and is one of His most precious gifts)—as in the shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, wearing the herb called *heart's-ease* in his bosom, who sang—

> "He that is down need fear no fall,
> He that is low no pride;
> He that is humble ever shall
> Have God to be his Guide."

But so too is the princely spirit, that aspires after the glory that cometh from God. The evil thing in high or low is selfishness.

In the ancient Church he was symbolized as the flying eagle, "kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam." He rises to loftier heights spiritually than any other of the New Testament writers; further still above clouds and earth-born mists; and ever looks and points upwards to the "heavenly places." As Augustine says, speaking of the four Gospels, "While the three Evangelists remained below with the Man Christ Jesus, and spoke but little of His Godhead, John, as though impatient of treading the earth, rose from the very first words of his Gospel, not only above the bounds of earth and air and sky, but above the angels and celestial powers, into the very presence of Him by whom all things were made."

Even physically, he is the eagle-eyed. Not to refer to the Book of Revelation, this is illustrated notably in three incidents recorded in his Gospel. On the evening of the crucifixion day, the Jews besought Pilate that the bodies should not remain on the cross during the Sabbath; and accordingly the soldiers came and brake the legs of the two who were crucified with Jesus; but when they found that He was dead already, they brake not His legs, but one of them with a spear pierced his side, and John, who was standing near, testifies, "Forthwith came there out blood

and water." In thus distinguishing, at such a time, the blood from the water that flowed forth with it, he shows the keenness of his eye.

Again, when Peter and he came running to the sepulchre on the morning of the first day of the week, John stooped down and looked in; he does not enter and search: he *uses his eye.*

Once more, at the sea of Galilee, when Jesus stands unknown on the dim shore, in the early morning light, John the eagle-eyed (though doubtless his heart helped his eye) is the first of the seven to recognize Him, and to say, "*It is the Lord.*"

Probably we should associate with the keenness and truthfulness of eye a kindred feature—namely, his minute delicacy in marking time. Thus he tells the hour of the day when he began to follow Jesus on the banks of the Jordan; the very moment when Jesus rose from table at the last supper to wash the disciples' feet; and the moment when Judas went out. I do not name this as of any very special importance; but I would venture to call attention to it in connection with the writing of both the Gospel and the Apocalypse. In both books, as it seems to me, we have the tokens of a *seer;* from the nature of the case more evident and large and peculiar in the latter book.

Putting together the various things recorded about him in the New Testament, and the indications of character in his own writings, we find as marvellous an illustration of what the grace of God can accomplish as even in Saul of Tarsus.* Here is no invalid or valetudinarian, but a man of

* In his "*Fuller Worthies,*" Dr. Grosart, recognizing in the "holy Herbert" "one whom we inevitably think of as a St. John in his ultimate tenderness and lovingness," says, in words that are very much to the point here, "I do not the less—rather the more—recognize the loveliness of the after-life in thus holding him to have been a debtor to the constraining and

healthful, robust physique, capable of sustained energy and patience.* There is the same healthfulness mentally: in his writings, with all their depth, we detect nothing hazy, vague, blurred; every chapter is like an engraving in which the nicest lines are distinctly seen. If Paul was characterized by a profound sense of "righteousness," John is as notably characterized (if such an expression may be allowed) by a profound and vehement sense of "truth":—a man to whom "a lie" is intolerable. Naturally and originally bold, intense, capable of the most ardent passion and enthusiasm, with an all-daring imagination, with a capacious understanding, and wonderful receptivity both of brain and heart, he is one of the grandest "captives" that ever surrendered to Jesus Christ; and he becomes one of the noblest ensamples of his new-fashioning power, so as ultimately to exhibit, beyond the rest, the perfect likeness of the Lamb.

It is obvious that such a man as this, combining qualities apparently opposite, or at least seldom found strongly developed in the same nature, was fitted to be an organ of the Lord in special and singular ways. He could see aspects of the Lord's character and life that were either hidden from others, or but dimly and partially discerned. He could hear words for which no other had an ear. Even apart from the special grace of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to him, and the bringing of all things to his remembrance thereby, it is not incredible that he should have retained in his memory, on to his old age, not merely brief sayings of Jesus, but whole discourses, and these of the profoundest order. Through such a man we may expect to receive

---

mastering 'grace of God' beyond most of his eminent contemporaries. Not of nature, but from Above—not as primary, but ultimate—came that saintliness which has perfumed his memory through the centuries, and will enduringly."

* *Mens sana in corpore sano.*

deep and peculiar revelations of the glory of Him who is the light and life of men. All the more so, that he does not complete and give forth his Gospel till he reaches his wonderful old age, having meditated for half a century on what he had witnessed in his youth.* Through all these marvellous but (to us) silent years, his "knowledge" would be growing larger and grander to him under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, till at length it ripens into what we find in Gospel and Epistles.

"We are free to suppose," says De Pressensé, "that the period of his life about which we have no information, was devoted to climbing that spiritual Tabor, on the summit of which the only and eternal Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, was to appear to him in all the glory of His divinity. The apostle, like Mary, pondered in his heart all that he knew of his Master. In the silence of devotion he listened to His living voice, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit discerned more and more of the mystery of His being."

---

* "And Him evermore I behold
Walking in Galilee,
Through the corn-field's waving gold,
In hamlet, in wood, and in wold.
By the shores of the Beautiful Sea
He toucheth the sightless eyes;
Before Him the demons flee;
To the dead He sayeth '*Arise!*'
To the living, '*Follow Me!*'
And that Voice still soundeth on
From the centuries that are gone
To the centuries that shall be."

Longfellow.

III.

The Companion of Jesus.

THE FORERUNNER. JOHN'S FIRST MEETING WITH JESUS. WITH HIM IN GALILEE, JERUSALEM, AND SAMARIA. "FOLLOW ME." THE APOSTOLIC APPOINTMENT. HIS NEW NAME. JAIRUS' DAUGHTER. THE TRANSFIGURATION. "WHO IS GREATEST?" FIRE FROM HEAVEN. "THY RIGHT HAND AND THY LEFT." GETHSEMANE AND THE CLOSING SCENES. THE RISEN LIFE.

PLANTING ourselves in the valley of the Jordan, in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius (which was not improbably a Sabbatic year), we find a remarkable spiritual movement going forward under the ministry of John the Baptist, very vividly described by all the Evangelists.

I image to myself a man of calm, saintly look, with eyes that seemed to pierce the Invisible, moving men not by his wild gesticulations, but by the deep solemnity of his spirit, the simple, fearless truth he spoke, and his appeal to the Messianic longings and hopes which then prevailed. Withdrawn from the luxurious world, with its enervating and selfish influences, he had lived to the age of thirty among the mountains west of the Dead Sea, preparing in solitude for the brief but great work of his life. He is however no hermit cut off from his fellow-men and taking no interest in their affairs, but a keen observer and discerner; and at the appointed hour he steps suddenly forward, crying to

the nation, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

We must not empty his word "*Repent!*" of its mighty meaning. It took *God* for granted, and sin. It looked to the errors and corruptions of the whole life of the day. It required a profound inward change as a "preparing of the way" of the Messiah. No mere temporary and superficial pain will satisfy the word. We find plentifully enough among men self-accusings, vain regrets, shame because sin is discovered, rage because sin has falsified its promise—making up a state bitter almost as hell—while yet there is no real change of mind as regards God. The Baptist's call looks to something not merely deeper, but essentially different. It requires a reversal of the whole existing attitude of men's hearts and minds. It is based on the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, which he is able to announce. Those who come to him confessing their sins, he baptizes beneath the flow of the swift river, and they form a special nucleus of waiters for the advent of the King.

His voice has power, and stirs the land to its remotest borders. Great multitudes gather to him; among them Jesus of Nazareth, who being baptized is pointed out by sign and voice from heaven as the Son of God, and immediately after disappears in the wilderness, east of the river, whence He emerges again at the end of His forty days' conflict with the Tempter. One day, on His re-appearing, the Baptist stood on the watch, attended by two of his disciples, Andrew and John,* fishermen from Bethsaida,

* Of course it is an inference that the unnamed disciple is John; but it is one which may be drawn with confidence. The time was "about the tenth hour." In chapter xix. 14, John adopts a reckoning which, if followed here, might give us ten in the morning. If so, they spent the whole day with Jesus. Augustine explains the mystery of the tenth hour by telling us that the number ten indicates the Law, which was given in ten precepts, and that the time was now come for the Law to be fulfilled by Love. Such fanciful explanations are common in the early writers.

and, seeing Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." He wished them to follow. As Chrysostom says, in his Homily on the words, "Christ the heavenly Bridegroom came to join to Himself the Church; He said nothing, but merely came. It was His friend the Baptist who put into His the bride's right hand." Small souls may not understand this willingness to lose disciples—this willingness to decrease that *He* might increase; but great and true souls do, saying gladly, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled."

The two young men silently followed, without venturing to address Him. Jesus turned and saw them following, and, having graciously questioned them, invited them to spend the day with Him. Gladly they complied. The conversation is a secret;* but its impression was such that they immediately attached themselves and began to bring others to Him as disciples. Our best help towards understanding the blessedness of the meeting is the recollection of that hour when He first revealed Himself to our own hearts as Saviour, in what Herbert calls the "first glance" of His "sweet and gracious eye." For John it is no unrepeated interview, as when two ships meet on the ocean, exchange signals, and pass onward each on its course, but is the beginning of a life-long fellowship. From henceforth he never passes beyond the orbit of this attraction; the hopes now kindled never die.

It is instructive to compare the experience of John with that of Paul. In the case of Paul, we find a man of

---

* As so much else. The silences of Jesus are like God's own in the matter of men's confidences. The delicacy—(a finer thing than our "honour")—is very noticeable in what He does not tell or inspire to be told, as well as in what He has told and inspired to tell. Doubtless, as a matter of memory, John had it in his power to report all that was said: but "something sealed" his lips.

powerful nature committed out and out against the cause of Jesus, thoroughly conscientious in his hostility, not merely standing out against the Gospel as a fraud or delusion, blasphemous in its very essence, but resolved to put it down. This man is suddenly arrested in the mid-career of his opposition. There is a mighty shock to his nature; and for three days he can neither eat nor drink. With John it seems to have been otherwise. We cannot indeed tell what the Baptist's ministry may have been to him; how the sorrows of death may have compassed him and the pains of hell gat hold upon him. But in coming to Jesus, he is "*drawn*," as with the cords of love and the bands of a man. There are those who think that all is not right with a man unless there is something approaching convulsion in the bringing of him to God. For myself, I entertain no manner of doubt that the great change is often accomplished thus. But the convulsion is not of the essence of the change. Often it is the sign of resistance and struggle against God, and has more to do with unbelief than with faith. Let us not limit God, or prescribe to Him, but accept His grace in whatever way it comes.

The public life of Jesus falls into three well-marked divisions, each with a special character of its own. The first division, comprising nearly a year, belongs mainly to Jerusalem. The characteristic feature of it is His assertion of Messiahship before the rulers and people. He comes to His own in their metropolis and temple, makes His claim, and enforces recognition or rejection. The first three Evangelists give no account of this part of His ministry; only they leave room for it between the Temptation, and the imprisonment of the Baptist. The blank is partially filled in, but only partially, by the Gospel of John i. 43—v. 47. From these chapters we learn that after a brief visit to Galilee,

He goes up to Jerusalem, and there takes action before the nation, and particularly its rulers, as the Christ, and abides their decision, which is given against Him. The proud and worldly-hearted men of Jerusalem could not recognize the Divine even when they saw it. The words of Isaiah were fulfilled in them about blinded eyes and hardened hearts. Many indeed believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did: but He did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man.

The purifying of the temple may be taken as the distinctest example of His assertion of Messiahship at this time. It is the feast of the Passover, and probably the first day of it. Entering the temple, He finds in it the sellers of oxen and sheep and doves, and the money-changers sitting—all quite right *per se*, but not *there*—and having made a scourge of small cords, He drives them all forth, muttering and cringing, no doubt,* along with the sheep and the oxen, and pours out the changers' money, and overthrows the tables, and says to them who sold the doves, *Take these things hence! make not My Father's house an house of merchandise!*

It was not the act of a burning-eyed zealot, nor yet a mere rebuke of the priests and rulers who permitted such things to be; but an avowal of authority in the house of God, associated with holy and glorious indignation at the desecration that was practised, indignation which the disciples recognized as "the zeal of Thine house." He as good as takes possession of the place. In our time, He would have

---

* It was not the weight or sharpness of the scourge that told. Milton touches the secret when he writes—

"Abashed the devil stood,
And felt *how awful goodness is.*"

been handed over to the magistrate on a charge of assault. A private person has no right to take the law into his own hands. No more had a private person in Jerusalem in those days. I infer that when the Jews asked Him, *What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?* it was not a mere off-hand inquiry on the spot, but a deliberate and formal question put by the rulers in view of an understood Messianic claim. He answers solemnly, in words that must have both perplexed and astounded them, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;* looking forward to His death on Calvary and His resurrection on the third day. In this answer lies the whole boundless presentiment of all futurity. It stuck to His enemies' ears in variously perverted forms, aye, and went fathomlessly deeper—into their consciences—and at length was made use of at the final capital arraignment of the bold Speaker.* The thing to observe is, that He calls the attention of the priests and rulers to Himself, in connection with a claim of right to purify His Father's house; and that too at the most solemn service of the year, and under the eye of the assembled tribes of Israel; and exhibits Himself (enigmatically indeed) as the purifier of religion and through death the builder of the everlasting temple.†

As regards John's attendance on the Lord during this period, it was only occasional, though perhaps more frequent than that of any other of the disciples. We gather that he accompanied Him to Cana, where he witnessed the "beginning of miracles;" that he went up with Him to Jerusalem to the Passover; that he returned with Him to Galilee, going through Samaria; and that he visited Jerusalem again

---

* *H. Ewald.*

† The purifying of the Temple, an act involving authority in the domain of religion, was the first public act of Jesus in Jerusalem after entering on His ministry: on His last visit He repeats the act, in an almost identical manner. The claim of authority was unmistakable, first and last.

at the next feast. With slight exception Jesus is out of our view during this period (as during that mysterious life-dawn in Nazareth), while it would seem that John and the other disciples, not yet organized into a community, return to their ordinary employments, for which their intercourse with Jesus has not unfitted or disinclined them.

Though we have no record, we may nevertheless imagine with a reasonable measure of certainty, how the life of the young man would proceed. He is busy as formerly, from day to day, with the commonplaces of a fisherman's outer existence; but all the while the thoughts, longings, and hopes, inspired by the announcement of the Baptist and by his own interviews and intercourse with Jesus, are taking more distinct shape and deeper root in his heart, and preparing him for his great destiny. It would be with him as it was with David the young shepherd after Samuel had anointed him in the midst of his brethren.

The second division of the Lord's ministry belongs to Galilee, which in a sense was to be the "seed-plot" for the rest of the world. Jerusalem has not received Him, and He withdraws from it, though not finally and utterly, to labour among a simpler people, not dominated by "scholasticism" and "priest-rule." Here He prepares the living stones that are to lie at the base of the living temple. The Messiah-life is lived without the Messiah-claims being put so prominently forward. God-taught hearts shall recognize Him. This division extends from His leaving Jerusalem as a centre, to His final return thither to die, comprising about a year and a half.* Leaving the pleasant and sequestered

* That is to say, on the supposition that about three years intervened between His baptism and His death. The interval, however, may have been considerably greater. The extreme limits are the fifteenth year of Tiberius and the recall of Pontius Pilate, embracing a space of eight years. H. Browne (*Ordo Sæclorum*) compresses it into little more than a year, reviving an old belief.

mountain-village of Nazareth, where His life had hitherto been passed, He chooses for His head-quarters the town of Capernaum, on the western shore of the Galilean lake, whence, accompanied by His disciples, He makes numerous excursions outward (we find traces of eight or ten), taking in that whole region, which in area was about equal to the county of York. We have not sufficient *data* to arrange His journeyings chronologically, or to draw the lines of movement; but we can form a very distinct idea of what goes on.

Loving disciples (like the Galilean women named in Luke viii. 2, 3) minister to Him of their substance. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. He receives lodging and hospitable entertainment from friendly hearts in the different places He visits; it may be now from a Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, now from a Zacchæus; and at another time He will spend the night under the starry sky or with only the shelter of overspreading branches. He proceeds from place to place on foot, and great multitudes attend and press upon Him, not in cities only, but even in desert and solitary places. He meets individual inquirers; teaches in the synagogues, in private houses, on the sea-shore, on mountain sides; proclaims the kingdom of God; graciously gathers the outcast; heals all manner of sickness and disease and the worse than madness of the soul, pouring forth blessings on all sides with the richest profusion. It is the springing up of day on those who sit in the region and shadow of death.

Early in this period He called John to be a personal attendant. Finding him on the sea-shore, washing and mending his nets, as if with no thought of any different or higher career, He said to him, *Follow Me.* It was not the voice of a stranger, but of One in whom he already believed and hoped, ever since that memorable interview on

the banks of the Jordan. From that moment he became the Lord's constant companion, a sharer of His wanderings, a joyous hearer of His words, a witness of His mighty works, receiving the impress of His personality in a sympathetic and loving soul. He is not now a mere ordinary observer, a private person following Jesus, a unit among the "great multitudes of people," but a chosen witness.

"I prayed to God," says George Fox, "that He would baptize my heart into *the sense of all conditions*, so that I might be able to enter into the needs and sorrows of all." This too the Lord does for the Apostle. His manner of life henceforth is exceedingly different from what it had been before. Sometimes a picture is painted in which it appears as a delightful wandering from place to place amidst the beautiful scenery of Galilee—a smiling holiday in a terrestrial paradise—in the society of a joyous-hearted "Visionary." "The meetings in the meadows, how full of excitement and how picturesque; and then the evenings spent at the large, shady homesteads by the side of flowing streams, with their fruits, their vines, and their fig trees!"* In point of fact, it was attendance on the Man of Sorrows, and selfishness must have turned away from it. If we crowd into one life whatever of toil and privation there is for an evangelist, for a teacher, for a physician, for a visitor of the poor, the sick, the ignorant, and the neglected, for a friend and Saviour of the guilty,—the day spent without food or rest, and the night often given to prayer, the "contradiction of sinners against Himself" continually meeting Him,—the burden of a world's sin and woe on His heart,—we shall understand what John's following of the Lord must have been.

It would create an untrue impression were we to take only those occasions on which his name is mentioned, as if there were contact only then; we must read the record

* Renan.

remembering that he is present throughout, and cognizant of all the wondrous disclosures made by the Only-begotten of the Father. To comment on all he witnessed would be to comment on the Four Gospels; even to allude to all he witnessed would be to reprint these Gospels. Hence I confine attention to the occasions on which he is introduced by name.

After being a chosen companion for some time, he is solemnly ordained an *Apostle*,—one of twelve who should go forth, endowed with the Holy Spirit, to testify what they had seen and heard, and to work in the Lord's name, for all ages and nations. In the history of the Church, great men have been raised up providentially for great works. The Apostles however received, in addition, the direct call of Christ Himself to their office. No gifts or endowments could have made them apostles without this call. Consequent on this call, they received also a special training, unsystematic and informal, very unlike what is given in our colleges, but fitted to prepare them very wonderfully for their future work. They were admitted into the Lord's closest intimacy and confidence. They enjoyed what might be called His private teaching. They were students of divine truth under Him. They were admitted to a share of His work, and were gradually prepared to walk and labour by themselves, without His immediate presence.

I wish we had "training classes" after this example for native preachers and evangelists in our various mission-fields, home and foreign. Ever so much might be taught in this way, which could not be thrown into forms for the intellect and communicated in a college lecture-room.

The apostolic appointment was very solemnly made. Jesus Himself spent all the previous night in prayer, upon an unnamed mountain, under the canopy of heaven. At dawn of day He gathered His disciples around Him, and

from among the whole number He chose twelve men, not by hap-hazard, or according to outward appearance, but in full knowledge of what they were, to whom He gave the name of Apostles. These twelve He endowed with power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease, and commissioned them to go forth and proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

His instructions in appointing them look far beyond the immediate present, and involve principles of universal and permanent application. As they have received freely, they are to give freely, and are thus prohibited from any mercenary use of their office. At the same time, they are not to make provision for their own temporal necessities; they are not to depend on their private fortunes; they are to leave purse and scrip behind them, the Lord engaging to carry out this principle in His dealings with them, "The workman is worthy of his meat." Coming to town or city they are to abide wherever a true welcome is given them for the Lord's sake. Though the errand on which they are sent is so gracious, they shall encounter opposition of all sorts, and from all quarters. Even blood relationship shall not avail for their defence: the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child.

Shall they then be silent, or speak with bated breath, or spread their message secretly? Nay, but on the contrary, what Jesus tells them in the darkness they are to speak in the light; what He whispers into their ear, they are to proclaim on the housetop, not fearing the face of man, but trusting in the Lord's defence and keeping. Throughout the strife which their going forth shall arouse, they are to be faithful unto death. Those who receive them and show them kindness for the Lord's sake—even to the giving of a cup of cold water—shall in nowise lose their reward.

Associated with the Lord, they become bound together as

a brotherhood, small and feeble indeed in itself, but forming the seed-germ of the mighty brotherhood that should embrace heaven and earth. John is called and set apart at the same time with the others. In ordaining him, Jesus names him a "Son of Thunder" (Mark iii. 17), a name descriptive of his spiritual character, in its intensity, power, and glowing zeal. This action of Jesus stands parallel to that which meets us in the Old Testament, when, in some vitally momentous hour of their experience, a new name was given to some of God's servants: thus, Abram becomes *Abraham*, and Jacob, *Israel*. Grace sometimes takes a very small soul, of naturally mean constituents, and fashions even out of *that* soul an instrument for great uses; but in this case it is a great nature that is chosen, with splendid, even imperial attributes, with magnificent capacity of outlook and receptivity, with heights and deeps and grandeurs beyond the rest, full of the loftiest possibilities, answerable in some measure to the greatness of the Lord Himself. The man is now a prince in the kingdom.*

Returning to Capernaum from one of His circuits of Galilee, the Lord makes John a chosen spectator of one of His mightiest and holiest works—the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead. This does not derive its importance from being the earliest miracle of the kind wrought by

* One gets an idea of the greatness of a chief of men from the greatness of those whom he gathers around him, and who carry out his plans. Thus, for example, one infers that Cromwell must have been a great-natured man, from the fact that he had Howe for his chaplain, Milton and Marvell for his secretaries, Blake for his admiral, and so on. *Noscitur a sociis*, and we might add, *a servis*. So we reason, perhaps unconsciously, in the case of other historic names. Speaking reverently, I would say, that in a parallel manner, we recognize the "sovran" greatness of our Lord in the fact that He gathered into His service and commanded men of such varied and magnificent natures as a Peter, a John, and a Paul; not to speak of men in other times. His heroes are no less wonderful than the most wonderful in the ancient days of Israel.

Jesus, for it is all but demonstrable that He had already restored the son of the widow of Nain, in the presence not only of His disciples but of many strangers. Its importance rests on other considerations. The story itself is very touching. A child of twelve, the only daughter of a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus, falls sick and is ready to die. We know not whether death crept near slowly and stealthily, or sprang suddenly upon her, as with the bound of a tiger from its lair: the simple entry is, "She lay a-dying."*

Some of us will read the story through experiences of our own. We recal the alternations of hope and fear in our bosoms over some dear ones laid low, the suspense, the sinking of heart, the prayers that were groanings, our choking reception of the doctor's words when he told us to hope no more; and thus we interpret to ourselves what was going forward in this ruler's house long ago.

The father hears of the return of Jesus to the neighbourhood, goes to seek Him, tells his story, and presents his request, we may imagine with what lowly yet pressing wistfulness. Without saying what He will do, Jesus goes with him. Every step He takes is a promise, and the father would understand it so. He is stayed on the way, however, by a woman who has suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years, and who touched the hem of His garment as He went, and was healed of her infirmity. Meanwhile, in the tarrying that ensues, the message is brought to the father, "*Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the Master.*" There seems nothing now but to say, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* We know not how the words

---

* "We watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro."

of the messenger smote the father's heart; but instantly Jesus stretches out a helping hand to him, saying, "*Fear not; only believe!*" and again He begins to accompany him to the house. Every step is promise again, only of more wondrous kind. Every step now means, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life;*" and He can no more falsify His "steps of grace" than His word of grace.

When He reaches the house, it is already filled with the loud lamentations of the professional mourners—on one side, "flute-players who were playing the established death's melody"; on the other side, bewailing kindred. He rebukes the noise, adding, "*The maiden is not dead, but sleepeth;*" but they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead, —the laughter genuine if the grief was not. He put them all forth, as Joseph put forth the Egyptians ere he revealed himself to his brethren; and then with His three disciples, Peter and James and John, He entered the chamber where the maiden lay. She has passed beyond the bounds of earth, beyond the bounds of time. There is the unbreathing marble, the darkening cheek that has scarce lost the warm tint of life, the lately vermilion lip already ashen, the fringed lids drawn down by loving fingers over eyeballs now sightless as stone, the unutterably tranquil and moveless repose that no passionate outcry can break. Jesus lifts the passive hand, cold and heavy in death—John all the while looking on and listening—and at the two words "*Talitha cumi*" life returned, and she arose.

John is a witness of the transaction from first to last; not only of the wonder at the end, but of all that led up to it. To such a soul as his it is not a revelation of mere omnipotence; but of tenderness, graciousness, loving-kindness, the calm consciousness of Divine resources, and all that lies in that unfathomable name, "*The Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*"

The next great event in the Lord's life of which John is a chosen witness, is the Transfiguration. It takes place in the afternoon of the Galilean ministry. Jesus makes only one circuit more—the most solemn of all—before He returns to Jerusalem to die. These closing weeks are shadowed by His approaching sufferings; the cross is ever present to His view; once and again He shows His disciples that He must suffer many things, and be rejected and put to death, and after three days rise again. Ere the darkness finally closes round, one brief and marvellous glimpse is given of the kingdom in its power.

He has conducted His disciples northward to the "coasts of Cæsarea Philippi," beyond the waters of Merom, just on the plateau beneath the great Mount Hermon, where the fountains of the river Jordan burst forth, and He seems to be still lingering in that neighbourhood. Toward evening, taking with Him Peter and James and John, He climbs "a high mountain apart,"* where for some time He continues in prayer, the three praying in silence near. On another occasion we might think of the grandeur of the scene spread out to the eye, the silver-shining moon and the bright stars in the intense, unfathomable azure; but all this is forgotten in presence of the Redeemer praying. Gradually the eyes of the three disciples become heavy-lidded, till of a sudden they close. How long their

* The name of Tabor is inextricably entwined with the story, not only in tradition, but throughout literature. The objection that the mountain was crowned with a fort need not count for much. The narrative gives no spectacular standing on a peak; all that is required is "a high mountain"; and in such a mountain as Tabor there are solitudes everywhere. The six days' interval, besides, allows ample time for making the journey. But Mark defers the going through Galilee till after. It was not till the transfiguration had taken place and the healing of the lunatic child, that "they departed thence, and passed through Galilee." More probably the event took place on the side of Hermon itself. As to the "apart," see Matt. xiv. 13, 23; xvii. 19; xx. 17; xxiv. 3.

sleep lasted they could not tell; but they are awakened by a bright effulgence streaming on their eyes, and when they look up, there is their Master transfigured before them.

The sleep must not be regarded merely as a sign of their human weakness, but as preparation for the glorious vision. It is a thing well known to all that, waking in the watches of the night out of a deep sleep, the false excitement of the day being gone, some eternal truth will often present itself to the mind with awful, self-revealing clearness, and overwhelming power. Read in the light of this fact, those psalms which speak about remembering God upon the bed, and meditating upon Him in the night-watches, have a fuller meaning. I cannot help thinking that the sleep of the three disciples on this occasion was a holy preparation for that which the Lord was to show them. It was a shorter and easier road out of the world of sleep, than out of the world of waking activities, into the unveiled kingdom of heaven.

When their eyes were closing, they had been beside the Man of Sorrows as He knelt in prayer. Now what a change! The fashion of His countenance is altered. Light shines forth from it like the sun. In the face is seen more than the radiance of a heavenly soul; it is rather the Shechinah-glory shining through the veil. His raiment too is white and glistering, whiter than fuller could white them, white as the snow which gleams far above, in its dazzling purity, on lofty Hermon.

Two men are with Him from the unseen world—ancient inhabitants of this—Moses, the giver of the Law, and the prophet Elijah, its great restorer—the representatives of all that was most exalted under the Old Covenant. They "appear in glory," and converse with Him about the decease, the "exodus," which He was soon to accomplish at Jerusalem: that mighty event to which both the Law and

the Prophets looked forward, and to which all subsequent ages look back.

The exodus of both these men had been very wonderful. In secretness and mystery, after surveying the Promised Land from the top of Nebo, Moses died "on the mouth of the Lord," as if the Lord kissed away his breath ;* and the Lord buried him in one of the ravines there, so that no man knoweth of his sepulchre. Elijah went up to heaven by a chariot of fire and horses of fire, in a whirlwind. The exodus of Jesus was to be very different :— through shame and uttermost agony, with arms outstretched upon the cross, and thorn-crowned head. This exodus is the subject of conversation. The theme became the moment; for all the felicities and glories of "the kingdom in power" rest on that "decease" which has been "accomplished at Jerusalem."

When the conversation ends, Peter exclaims, as eager to detain the glorious vision, "Lord, it is good to be here ; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias ;" not knowing what he said.† While he spoke, a bright cloud over-

* In the Legend of the Death of Moses, as given by Rev. S. Baring-Gould in *Legends of Old Testament Characters from the Talmud*, three angels dig the grave on the mountain, and Moses lies down in it, closes his eyelids, presses his hand on his heart, and places his feet in order. Then the Lord calls to the soul to come forth and mount to Paradise, but the soul has not courage to come. Then He promises a place in the highest heaven, beneath the Cherubim and Seraphim who bear up the eternal throne ; but still the soul doubts and quakes. "Then God bent over the face of Moses, and kissed him. And the soul leaped up in joy, and went forth with the kiss of God to Paradise."

† "If the contemplation of Christ's glorified manhood so filled the Apostle with joy that he was unwilling to be sundered from it, how shall it fare with them who attain to the contemplation of His glorious Godhead ? And if it was so good a thing to dwell with two of His saints, how then to come to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn that are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all—these not seen through a glass darkly, but face to face ? '—*Anselm.*

shadowed them, and a Voice came out of the cloud, "*This is My beloved Son; hear Him!*" They fell on their faces on the grassy mount, sore afraid: and when next they lifted up their eyes the heavenly visitants were gone; the glory had vanished; they saw no man save Jesus only. Moses and Elias, the servants, have disappeared; only the Son remains.

Of this marvellous and profoundly significant event, John is a chosen witness. It was something to the Lord Himself—though *what* must remain in mystery. It was something to the three disciples who witnessed it; to say the least, it was the completion of the teachings of this period, and the introduction to the events that were about to transpire, and must have seemed in the life of the Man of Sorrows like the light in the heart of the furnace-smoke when Abram came through his horror of great darkness. But, beyond all this, it has a common meaning for all believers, being part of the great Christian revelation. It is a symbol of the harmony of old and new, a disclosure of the dignity of the Lord's person above the greatest in the Old Testament, a testimony to the vital importance of His death, a momentary glimpse of the kingdom in its power, a token of His mediatorial supremacy and glory—kingly, priestly, and prophetic.

In our thinking, we keep these offices distinct from each other, conceiving of them separately and in succession. But in Him they meet and form a Unity, for which we in our theological nomenclature have no name. We know of kings, but He is not a King merely. We know of priest-kings, like Melchizedek; but He is not a Priest-King merely. He is King, Priest, and Prophet, in one, and this is exhibited for one brief hour in the Transfiguration. Here is Kingliness—fulfilling the word, "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His *kingdom.*" Here is Priesthood—seen

in the decease that He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. And here is Prophet-hood—declared in the word never spoken concerning any other, "*Hear Him!*" His Kingliness is not reward bestowed upon Him for His fulfilment of the functions of Priest and Prophet, but is fundamental and original; He is King first, and His prophetic and priestly work is the carrying forth of His Kingliness. All this bodies itself out in the Transfiguration. The influence of the scene upon John's mind at the time is not declared; but we can see it in his Gospel, as when, long years after, he wrote these words, "*We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.*"

Shortly after the Transfiguration there arose a reasoning among the twelve as to who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. A deep and vital subject, on which it is well to be instructed. We must not blame the disciples for discussing it. I do not think it charitable to affirm that they "wrangled" about it, and that "*of course*" the question with them was not about greatness "in the true, heavenly signification of the word, but in a common, earthly, and carnal sense, and one to merit rebuke." Was it not the very perception that their Master's view of greatness was different from the world's that led to the discussion? Was it not that a higher world was dawning upon their inward eye? There were wrong feelings, doubtless, in their minds; but at least the question is a worthy and noble one.

The question is brought for decision to Jesus, He Himself apparently introducing it. Without going back upon their discussion as they walked in the way, He deals with the subject itself. His whole manner of dealing with it is noteworthy. First of all, He "sat down"—a significant act in the light of what follows. Then He calls the twelve around Him, and says, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." The desire of

precedence for the sake of personal honour or advantage is alien from the spirit of Christ. The lowliest place is noblest if it be the place of service and usefulness; he who brings up the rear, in humility and obedience to the Lord, is foremost of the band. Saying these words, "He took a child and set him in the midst." As I read the narrative, He selects the child; any one would not have done; the child selected is "one of these little ones that believe in Me" (Mark ix. 42). This act of His was full of significance, and would have been a complete answer to them, even if He had not said a single word more. There, He tells them by His act, there in parable is the greatness concerning which you have been disputing.

Beyond the act, however, we have also His words of explanation. Taking the child in His arms, He says, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me but Him that sent Me." What is meant by "receiving" the Lord symbolizes by taking the child into His arms. We can see the whole scene—the love and tenderness and protection of Jesus, on the one hand; and the child's confiding, happy look, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." He who shall so receive a believing child receiveth Christ Himself; nay, receives the Father who sent Him. The most child-like are Christ's truest representatives. The most Christ-like thing we can do, in relation to these child-like ones, is to receive them in love and tenderness, even as He took them up in His arms. When the question of greatness is considered from this view-point, it will be stript of many perplexities. Self-assertion, jealousy, lofty looks, ambition to climb above others, and things of like kind, springing from the spirit that makes self the centre, will be felt to be utterly out of keeping with greatness in the Christian sense.

As the Lord is speaking, John remembers the case of

one whom they had seen casting out devils, and whom they had forbidden, because "he followeth not with us." I do not suppose that they fancied they had a monopoly of healing, and wished to guard it from this unlicensed practitioner; nor that they were moved by the "pride of officialism"—as even a good man may object to another good man doing good in "my parish." More probably, they feared some injury to their Master's cause. The man may have seemed to them one who touched the ark with unhallowed hands. Yet what if he were really one of the "little ones"? Whatever may have been the association of ideas in John's mind, he now calls this case up, and brings it under the notice of the Lord.

We must not assume that it was he who interfered with the nameless man, and tried officiously to stop him; he merely fell in with the rest—"*we* saw, *we* forbade"—and now he reports the case in order to elicit the Lord's judgment for their common instruction and guidance. Was it right or was it wrong to do what we did? The Lord answers, "*Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us;*" the "Forbid not," with its added reason being as much as to say, *Wish him rather God-speed: his heart is in the right place; he is giving us aid.* It might indeed have been better if the man *had* followed with the disciples; it may have been his fault that he did not. Had the Lord been dealing *with the man*, He might have shown him this. But in dealing *with the disciples*, the man's aloofness from their company is neither approved nor disapproved; only they are bidden to regard him as a friend and fellow-helper.

Here is a word that goes very deeply into the question of practical Christian work. The man who is working on Christ's side, even though he does not fall in with us, is not to be hindered, nor regarded suspiciously or strangely. There is often perplexed uneasiness among good men about

this matter. Jealousy has crept in where there might have been holy emulation; estrangement and half-dislike where there might have been mutual confidence. We have not always had the pleasure we should have had in good work not done by us or our friends, or in noble Christian character existing beyond our borders. There has even sprung up an unhappy feeling of chagrin and mortification, as if we were cut out of some honour that belonged of right to us. We may not have gone the length of forbidding others (even in our hearts) to do the Lord's work, because they followed not with us; but we have looked askance at them, and have come short of Paul's word, "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." The teaching now given to John goes farther than mere "toleration" of those who are not of our special fellowship; it paves the way for hearty delight in every good work wrought in the name and power of Jesus Christ.*

The time at length approaches for Jesus to be "received up" into His glory. So He steadfastly sets His face towards Jerusalem, with a will surrendered to His Father, knowing the dark and terrible things immediately in advance. His march to Jerusalem gathers awe from something in the manner of it, as well as from the often-reiterated intimations of His approaching death. The trembling disciples follow Him, amazed and afraid. On His way, standing in need of refreshment and lodging for the night, He sends forward two disciples to a neighbouring Samaritan village to make preparations; but the villagers refuse to receive Him, His face being toward Jerusalem. One may understand it by calling to mind how bitter religious feuds commonly are—as, for example, between Roundhead and Cavalier, Orangeman and Ribbonman. It was not a simple refusal of hospitality to wayfaring strangers, but a refusal on

* Compare Numbers xi. 24—29.

religious grounds, and, as John views it, a refusal offered *to the Lord.*

Instantly, it may be, he recals to mind what Jesus lately said about the place that would not receive His messengers, "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah"—the cities that were consumed with fire from heaven—or His awful "*Woe!*" against Capernaum. His anger is kindled by the indignity offered to his Master; and with swift energy he would clutch the lightnings and hurl them against the offending village. May we execute Thy *Woe*? Shall we command fire from heaven to consume them, as Elias did in this very land of Samaria and from the top of one of these very hills? (2 Kings i.)

It is not a mere outburst of passionateness, that might calm down in an hour; nor a rash and hasty utterance, like what we might have expected from Peter: it is rather an importation of the spirit of human nature into the cause of Christ, proposing to inflict temporal pains and penalties on His opposers. I would not say that there was *vindictiveness* in the proposal. I would even grant that in the zeal which flames out there is a certain mistaken nobleness. Matthias Claudius* presents the favourable side for the disciples very strikingly:—

"I cannot suffer stigma to rest upon my James and John; I must speak a word for them with thee, and save their honour. In the first place, they had before them the example of Elias, whom they had so lately seen in very glorious circumstances; and then they sought their Master's approbation, and naturally His power also. But thou usest to say, 'Be silent of another, or put thyself completely in his place.' We will do so: independently of our purpose, it were well to be seated *there.*

* (1740—1815) Commonly known, from the name of his Journal, as *The Wandsbeck Messenger.*

"Christ was journeying with His disciples to Jerusalem He travelled hereabout amidst matters Samaritan, and made this journey, as all His others, that He might provide the inhabitants and all men with a place of rest, and prepare for them an eternal refuge. The disciples indeed although He had occasionally spoken of it to them, might not yet perhaps have so entirely understood this. But they had been about with Him now (these two) for three whole years, and had seen that His journeyings were not on His own account, and that He was not come to be ministered unto; that, right and left, and without any respect of persons, He taught and did nothing but good; that He had never to be supplicated twice, and that He met every one who needed Him with love and friendliness.

"Now too it was the last time that He required the lodging, for the time was completed, and He was to go hence to meet ignominy and death. And now His night couch is denied Him, and His messengers repulsed.

"Canst thou take it amiss of the disciples that they were angry *then*? He is no base man who is indignant at seeing such kindness met with ingratitude, and justice and equity trodden under foot! Now add to this the adherence and love which the disciples manifested in their attachment to and dependence upon their Master. He to whom it is all the same whatever happens can speak good-humoured enough. But he who is somewhat concerned thereby, and whose breast is not altogether empty, is affected otherwise than the icicles on the roof of the Temple of Tolerance.

"Christ indeed chided them; and He who, having in His hand 'fire from heaven,' could hold back and conceal it beneath His coat woven throughout, and could suffer treatment as a malefactor before friend and foe, that the will of God, the Father in heaven, might be done—*He* might chide, and before *Him* the disciples would have to be

amed at not knowing of what spirit they were the chil-
n. But I also know that before every other spirit they
nothing to blush for, and that the spirit of Christianity
ot called without cause a *spirit of Glory*."

Still there is a distinct element of error present—kin-
d to that of the servants in the parable, who proposed
oot up and burn the tares that grew among the wheat.
s out of this spirit that persecution for conscience' sake
since arisen—that men who could not call down fire
n heaven have kindled fires on earth to burn heretics
to consume error. The Lord rebukes John, and sets him
t, telling him, *You know neither the manner of your own
it, nor of Mine; for I am not come to destroy souls, but to
.* Christ does not here judge the spirit of Elias, which
the spirit of avenging righteousness, and which har-
nized with that dispensation of "fiery law" which he
resented. But the spirit of the New Covenant is higher
ven the spirit of salvation. It would overcome evil with
d. It is expressed in the dying prayer of Jesus, "Father,
ive them; for they know not what they do."

The rebuke (so gracious-hearted) is a fresh revelation to
n, giving him deeper insight into the mind of Christ.
shall not afterwards find him disposed to use physical
e on the Lord's behalf, or to anticipate the awful day of
righteous judgment of God. He understands from
ceforth that Christ is not to be served by the wrath of
n, by fires as of Smithfield, or fires of sarcasm and
n; nay, not even by invoking the wrath of God upon
osers, or by calling out—not in holy indignation, but—in
spirit of the flesh, *Curse ye Meroz;* but by truth and love
righteousness and holy self-sacrifice.

The third division of the Lord's ministry, comprising
ut half a year, extends from the time of His finally

leaving Galilee onward to His crucifixion. Hitherto He has spoken the words and done the works of the Christ, and some few have known Him : He must now assert Himself openly, and meet the issue of rejection and death. Accordingly, He sends seventy of His disciples, two and two, before His face, to announce the nearness of the kingdom in the person of its King. His progress, following in their steps, would be somewhat slow and circuitous. Leaving Galilee, He crosses into Perea and makes His way southward, attended by great multitudes whom He teaches and heals. This journey is largely illustrated in the six chapters of the Gospel of Luke, beginning with the tenth. The character of the ministry is similar to what it had been in Galilee ; and many of the Galilean incidents, in all their important features, are reproduced ; many too of the Lord's words are re-uttered, in fresh combinations. But all was done as by One who was pressing forward to a mark, and could not needlessly linger.

We have no means of determining the exact duration of this itineracy in Perea, but it must have been extended over a good many weeks, broken only by a short visit to Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication. He finally leaves Perea, in consequence of a message from Martha and Mary, the sisters of Larazus, which brings Him to Bethany to work the great miracle recorded in the eleventh chapter of John ; after which He withdraws into a country near to the wilderness,* to a city called Ephraim, where He continues in retirement with His disciples. The raising of Lazarus from the dead, operating so powerfully upon the popular mind, renders it necessary for the rulers to come to a decision respecting Jesus ; and their decision is, that He must die. This is what it has come to at last, even as He foresaw and foretold.

* The wilderness behind Jericho, a weird, desolate, awful region, equal to a hundred Glencoes.

At the approach of the passover, He goes up to Jerusalem to finish His work. On the way thither He gives numerous and solemn intimations of His approaching death, entering into startling detail on some points, and in particular that He should be crucified—yet ever moving forward with the tread of a Victor. In connection with one of these intimations, the brothers James and John come to Him, and ask places on His right hand and His left in His kingdom. I have already called attention to the incident for the light which it throws upon the personal character of John; I refer to it now for the insight which it gives John into the mind and heart of Christ.

In the kingdom which He came to establish there *are* high places, higher than the thrones of earth, and high places too that we may covet; but they are not awarded from personal favour or partiality, or in an arbitrary manner: they are given according to the purpose and preparation of the Father. Reigning with Christ follows upon suffering with Him,—drinking His cup, and being baptized with His baptism. Even as He Himself was "made perfect through sufferings," so through fellowship in His sufferings His followers are delivered from sinful self-will, and made meet for lofty service. In kingdoms of the world the prince's place is one of domination: in the kingdom of heaven it is one of love and self-sacrifice for the good of others. Whoever will rise to greatness therein must, in a true heart and pure love, stoop to be the minister and servant of others. The place of true usefulness is the place of true honour. Thus is exhibited the Lord's own royal might and power of rule: although the King of eternity, He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." One cannot but see what a revelation for the Apostle was here.

After a breathing-time in the village of Bethany, where

He is anointed with spikenard by Mary's grateful love, the Lord enters Jerusalem as her King on the first day of the week in which He was to suffer. Attended by His disciples and the multitudes that had gathered to Bethany, and met by many others on the way, He rides on a young ass, whereon never man yet sat, the road being strewed with garments and palm-branches, and loud, joyous shouts rending the air, *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!* This entry into the holy city, taken in connection with His words and acts in the Temple, is the public and unmistakable assertion of His Messianic claims. No doubt could now remain in any mind on the question, *Whom makest Thou Thyself?* The few remaining hours are filled with Messianic works, wrought in the presence and midst of mortal enmity. Gladly, even thankfully, would His enemies have condoned the past, if He would now have abandoned His pretensions and submitted to their will: but, instead, He puts His claims more unmistakably than ever.

His last open appearance in Jerusalem takes place on the Tuesday—a day whose occurrences are more fully recorded than those of any day of His life, the crucifixion-day alone excepted. On the afternoon of that day, He goes out as usual to Bethany, and on the way thither—as one taking a last, sad adieu,—He sits down on the slope of Olivet over against the Temple, with Peter and Andrew, James and John, beside Him, and near the spot where, two or three days before, He had beheld the city, and wept over it. That little group is one of the most remarkable that ever appealed to human imagination; the very quietness of the withdrawal (like the going down of the last lights on a finally impenitent soul) infinitely solemn and pathetic. The holy city lies completely under their eye, crowded with more than a million worshippers, and hemmed in, both east and

south, by deep rocky glens which already lie in evening shadow. The Temple seems within a stone's cast. The smoke of the evening sacrifice still floats above its courts in the clear air. Looking upon the mighty pile, bathed in the gorgeous lights of sun-set,—

"like a mount
Of alabaster, topped with golden spires,"

they question Him concerning words He had spoken, portending the utter ruin of that sacred place; and He shows them in outline a prophetic picture of the future, onward to "the coming of the Son of Man"—a picture that should be compared with the visions of the Apocalypse, the perspective being that of Him to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. His words give the death-blow to any lingering hopes they may have cherished of a present sovereignty, with Jerusalem for its splendid capital.

The Wednesday is spent in quietness at Bethany; the sleep that closes it is His last on earth—till He slept the sleep of death in Joseph's tomb.

On the Thursday He sends Peter and John to the city, to make preparations for celebrating the passover. His instructions to them indicate His foreknowledge of all that was about to take place. He sees the very man who is to meet them, bearing a pitcher of water,* and the guest-chamber (which He is to turn into a holy of holies) furnished and prepared, even as He foresees the cross and the glory beyond.

The same evening they all take their places at table, and after that marvellous incident, the washing of the disciples' feet, in which the spirit of the kingdom is so won-

* In the East, the water-pitchers are usually carried by women; scarcely ever by men.

derfully shown forth—humility and love and sublimest majesty conjoined—the sacred feast proceeds.

By and by Jesus appears troubled in spirit, and testifies, *One of you shall betray Me.* The words fall among them like a thunderbolt from out a clear summer sky—no one speaks—they look into one another's faces with mute and pale amazement. When they find breath, they begin to inquire, in sorrowful self-suspicion, *Master, is it I?* And probably while this word is going round, Peter beckons John to ask who is meant. John is nearest to the Lord, and he leans back on Jesus' bosom, and whispers the question, *Lord, who is it?* Dipping the morsel of bread in the dish, and giving it to Judas, who was also near (perhaps immediately on His other side), Jesus whispers the reply, *He it is to whom I give the sop.* These words were spoken low, so that only John would hear them. Then He added aloud, "One that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me: the Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born." A low whisper comes from Judas as he receives the sop, *Is it I?* and the answer is given, *Thou hast said.* After the sop, Satan enters into the man; he nerves himself for the final act, resisting the last appeal of love, and smothering the last remorseful feeling that stood between him and his sin; and almost immediately after, "he went out, and it was night." *

After the withdrawal of the traitor, there follows the

* "Remorse may disturb the slumbers of a man who is dabbling with his first experiences of wrong; and when the pleasure has been tasted and is gone, and nothing is left of the crime but the ruin which it has wrought, then, too, the Furies take their seats upon the midnight pillow. But the meridian of evil is, for the most part, left unvexed; and when a man has chosen his road, he is left alone to follow it to the end." So writes Froude, in his *History of England* (quoted by Dr. Farrar). But surely

simplest, heavenliest, most profound and wonderful of all the Lord's discourses that are left on record, concluding with the sublime intercessory prayer, which shows us how He pleads within the vail. That discourse sinks deep into John's heart, to be reproduced long years after in his Gospel. Then, full of holy serenity, Jesus leads them forth across the brook Kedron, to the garden of Gethsemane, a well-loved *rendezvous* of the little band on the way to Bethany, and here takes place one of the most awful and mysterious scenes of His life. He leaves the eight disciples at the entrance of the garden, and takes with Him Peter and James and John a stone's-cast further, into the deeper shade of the olive-trees, to watch and pray with Him. There He "began to be sorrowful and very heavy"—"exceeding sorrowful even unto death," with a holy and awful *angina pectoris*. Mark adds that He was also "sore amazed," as at some new and dread experience from which He recoils. He now leaves the three, as He had left the eight—for human fellowship can go no farther—and falling prostrate on the cold ground, His sweat pours forth like great blood-drops, while (thrice in succession) He prays, *Father* (*Abba, Father*, Mark reports it), *if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.* He has come into the world for this very hour; and yet to His holy human soul, quick with all the finest sensibilities of our nature, it is inconceivably distressing.

The whole scene is one of inscrutable mystery, in the presence of which we kneel and are silent. John would now begin to understand to what the Lord pointed when

---

that word, "*left alone*," is out of place. At every step in the sinner's dreadful career, there is a voice calling aloud, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for He will abundantly pardon." One cannot trace the story of Judas without perceiving that Jesus dealt with his conscience to the last, and that His dealing justifies the phrase that has been used to describe it—*melting the betrayer*.

He spoke of "My cup" and "My baptism." Whatever other elements are present, whatever recoil from the physical torture and shame of crucifixion, here is the same horror, the same inward suffering, as when He groaned in spirit and was troubled at the grave of Lazarus, or when He wept over guilty Jerusalem; and that afterwards broke out from the cross in His cry of forsakenness. There is no sign of remorse—that was impossible and inconceivable for the Holy One of God; but there is some dread connection with sin, as that on which the curse of God eternally rests. Here is an instance of that "travail of soul" which the Sin-bearer endured when "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." That John was able in a measure, though imperfectly, to enter into sympathy with Him, in His unutterable agony, is evinced by the effect produced on his physical frame, when, along with his two companions, he "*slept for sorrow*"—nature overpowered by the share he took in his Master's conflict.*

The agony is just over, when a band of soldiers and others from Jerusalem, led by Judas, come to apprehend Him. Their movements are as silent and stealthy as possible, consistently with officialism; but Jesus knows of their approach, and goes forth to meet them. One scintillation of His power, showing that they could do nothing against Him except as He permitted, and that He laid down His life of Himself unconstrained and in loving freeness, and He calmly surrenders Himself into their hands, to be bound and led away. The cup He takes is "the cup which *My Father* giveth Me."

---

* I check that expression, "*the Master's conflict.*" It seems to me that we are getting too fond of calling Him *The Master.* He *is* the Master, that is, the Teacher; and "never man spake like this Man:" but He is something more; and it was not as "*Master*" that He endured this conflict. How one longs to hear Him called "*Saviour*"!

After the first show of resistance, the disciples are scattered, but in a short time John recovers himself and follows *—not like Peter, "afar off," but closely, and as a friend, the only visible friend that Jesus then had. Strong in love, he is with Him all that sleepless, dreadful night, and all that "guilty morning," as He is hurried about from place to place, into the presence of Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate, and the Jews, and subjected to all indignity and wrong—legal forms observed while justice is trodden under foot.† In the morning, by our nine o'clock, the Son of the Blessed hangs between two malefactors on the cross. All day the malice of triumphant wickedness surges around Him. They shake the head; they shoot out the lip. John stands near Him in the surge, learning what it means to drink His cup, and to have place on His right hand and His left, and witnessing His long, slow, dreadful sufferings, till He bows His head and dies. Only love of the purest and intensest kind—the love which is stronger than death, and is love to the core—could have kept its station thus: feebler love would have run away to be out of sight.

Just before the darkness fell—in that hour of untold agonies—Jesus seeks out with His eye His mother Mary and the beloved disciple; and to His mother He says, as His glance passes from her to John (for He could not move His nailed hand,) *Woman, behold thy son;* and to John—His glance passing back again to Mary, *Behold thy mother.*

---

* Not "another disciple," but "the other disciple." Archbishop Whately, "*On the Characters of our Lord's Apostles*," thinks he has proved that "the other disciple" who followed Jesus, and procured admission for Peter into the high-priest's house, was not John, but *Judas*.

† A legal acquittal was pronounced by Pilate; and Jesus was sacrificed to clamour and fear. The Governor was not a jurist, but a soldier, and he, too, irresolute and vacillating; fearful for his office, and even for his life, for he served the "dark and unrelenting Tiberius."—*Greenleaf: Trial of Jesus*.

It is not earthly support and care alone that Jesus bequeaths to her, but a faithful *heart* that could understand her. And "from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." Whatever impulse may previously have been in his own breast to do this very thing is now sanctioned and sanctified by the word of the Lord.

After Jesus had bowed His head and given up the ghost, John still holds his station near the cross. In order that the crosses might not carry their ghastly burdens over the Sabbath, the soldiers come before nightfall and break the legs of the two malefactors who are crucified with Jesus; but finding Him dead already, they do not break His legs, but one of them in passing thrusts his broad spear-blade into His side—to make sure—"and forthwith came thereout blood and water," in such quantity and so distinguishable, that John takes special notice of it, and bears solemn "record"—record which not only settles the fact of His death, and confirms ancient prophecy, and furnishes symbol to Christian thought and feeling, but enables physicians to speak of it from their special scientific point of view.*

The burial takes place the same evening. The world seems now to have gotten its way, and to have succeeded in quenching the light that pained its conscience and condemned its works; and the time seems come for them to be merry and send gifts to one another: He who troubled them is safely disposed of.

All the next day, being the Sabbath, "the flesh" of the Redeemer "rests in hope." Early in the morning that

---

* See Dr. Stroud's treatise, "*On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*," originally published thirty years ago, to which fresh attention has since been called by Dr. Hanna in "*The Last Day of our Lord's Passion.*" (Appendix containing Letters from Sir James Simpson and others.) There is no ground for supposing—as is sometimes done—a "*gush*" of blood and water. The heart—the engine that could have caused such a gush—was dead.

follows, Mary Magdalene goes forth with other women to the sepulchre. Seeing the stone taken away, she instantly concludes that the body is removed, and runs breathless and sorrowful to tell Peter and John. The two friends immediately hasten to examine for themselves. They run both together, but John, swifter-footed, outruns Peter, and comes first to the sepulchre. Stooping down and looking in, he sees the linen clothes lying, but does not enter. Peter, characteristically, goes in at once and looks round. The linen which had enswathed the body lies in one place, and the napkin which had been about the head is folded up and laid in another place. At first glance this may appear a trivial matter, noticed only by the fondness of love; but not so if we reflect. There is nothing torn, nothing disarranged, no sign of violence or hurry; everything betokens deliberation and composure. The Living One had risen and gone forth "with grand tranquillity" The grave-clothes are folded up and laid deliberately aside: the Lord has no more need of them. Then John "went in also, and he saw and believed." Believed what? Not that the grave was empty; that he *saw*. But rather—foremost in faith—he believed what he had not hitherto understood from Scripture, that the Lord was risen, to die no more. What he saw made the meaning of Scripture and the repeated predictions of the Lord flash at once before his mind.

The same day at evening, and on subsequent occasions, John is present when the risen Lord appears to His assembled disciples, filling them as with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, and commissions them to be His messengers to all the ends of the earth, to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins.

One special manifestation is recorded at great length, which took place on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Seven

disciples go a-fishing, of whom John is one. These seven had gone about with Jesus, hearing His words and witnessing His mighty works; they had been spectators of His sufferings; they had seen Him risen; they had heard that word of His, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"; they had felt His breath on them when He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; and now (apparently without any misgiving or sense of inconsistency) they are busy at their old employment as fishermen. They toil all night in vain. As they make for shore in the morning twilight, a Stranger whom they know not questions them, and bids them cast the net on the right side of the ship. They do so, and the net is filled. John, recognizing the beloved voice and form and way, exclaims, *It is the Lord!* and they all hasten to the shore, the denier foremost. After eating together, and after the gracious dealing with Peter that ensued, Jesus rises, and begins to walk away from the spot, saying to Peter, *Follow Me*,—who does so. John also follows, unbidden and silently, as he had done once before when the Baptist said, *Behold the Lamb of God!* Peter, turning round and seeing him, asks, *Lord, and what shall this man do?* To whom the Lord replies, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me.* His future lies wholly in My will. The saying went abroad among the disciples that John was not to die; and a legend arose afterwards that he only slumbered, breathing, in his grave, and that the turf was tremulous above him. Yet Jesus said not, *He shall not die*, but *If I will that he tarry till I come.*

This is the last glimpse we have of John's companionship with Jesus on to the ascension into heaven, when He sat on the right hand of God. On the banks of the Jordan, in the beginning, he followed Jesus unbidden, and abode with Him that day; on the shore of the sea of Galilee,

after the resurrection, he begins to follow—again unbidden —in a course that runs down through eternity,—neither death nor life able to separate him from his Lord and Saviour.*

It is thus apparent that not only had John special qualifications, both by nature and by grace, for being a witness of the Lord's life, but special opportunities of observation and intimate knowledge were afforded him; special disclosures of the Lord's glory were opened up to him; and none of the twelve penetrated more deeply into the revelation, or treasured it up more faithfully and lovingly in his heart. "We beheld His glory," he says in the beginning of his Gospel; and in his first Epistle he reports how he had heard, and seen with his eyes, and looked upon, and his hands handled, the manifested Word of Life. In view of what had been disclosed to him, he is overwhelmed by the impossibility of duly and worthily setting it forth, and thinks of all he has told in his Gospel as the merest nothing compared with what there was to tell. Looking upon his little, slender manuscript—which to us is so profound and wonderful—he exclaims, *I have shown you a part of His way; but the world itself could not contain the books that might be written, rehearsing the superb story.* It is testimony to the fulness of knowledge, of insight, of understanding, of memory, of sacred joy, which he possessed; and to the impossibility of telling all he knew.

---

* John *alludes* to the Ascension, as in his report of Christ's words, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;" and it is—to say the least—the corollary to his Gospel; but he nowhere gives any account of it as a fact—except we name Rev. xii. 5.

IV.

The Apostle.

THE COMMISSION. JOHN THE ASSOCIATE OF PETER IN JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA. DISAPPEARS FROM THE HISTORY. EPHESUS. PATMOS. CLOSE OF HIS LIFE.

THE Lord's instructions to the Apostles on the eve of His Ascension were that they should go forth to all nations, telling what they knew concerning Him, and preaching repentance and remission of sins in His name wherever they went.

Of the two Christ-given words—carrying in them at once an awful Accusation and a most gracious Promise—the first was "*Repentance.*" They were to proclaim it as a Divine requirement—as an absolute necessity, without which no life can be right, but must go on from bad to worse—as a blessed possibility through the gracious working of the Divine Spirit—with a kneeling-place provided for it, such as Esau found not. Speaking this word, they should have conscience and God on their side, the world over.

In the same breath they were to proclaim, "*Remission of sins,*" through the ever-availing atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus—so that the scarlet should be made white as snow, and the crimson as wool.

Their preaching was to draw its force, not from the

clearness and cogency of their reasoning, but from the authority of Him in whose name they spoke. Should men demand justification of the message, they were simply to tell that the Crucified and Risen One had bidden them publish it. It was for this mission that the Lord had chosen and educated them.

Not even yet, however, were they prepared to engage in it. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49). *The work is too great and difficult* — one might say — *too awful and tremendous; who is sufficient for it?* And another might say, *The world is perishing, and we have a message of salvation to bear abroad; let us go forth on our mission at once; not a day, no, not an hour is to be lost!* Both these moods of mind the Lord meets. To the man overwhelmed with a sense of insufficiency He gives "the Promise of my Father." To the man who would hasten forth at once, he says, *Wait—tarry—till endued with power from on high.* More was needed than personal acquaintance with Jesus, such as the twelve had enjoyed for years; more, than to have seen Him risen, and to have heard the voice of His mouth; more, than opened understandings and knowledge of the Scriptures; more even than message and commission direct from the Lord Himself: there needed "power from on high." Tarry till ye obtain it, for it will assuredly be given. It was upon no fool's errand that they were to go forth; but on at once the sublimest and most daring—and the most rational—mission that men ever set their faces to.

It is worthy of being noticed that while the missionary idea was set forth in its grandly-simple elements, so that there is no need for revision or enlargement in any future century, yet outward arrangements were not prescribed, nor even shadowed out in the dimmest way. There is Divine

foresight in this. We in our narrow wisdom draw plans and construct machinery and form arrangements which, we fancy, shall be perpetual; not understanding how the "increasing purpose" that runs through the ages necessitates ever varying and enlarging methods. The consequence is that we become formal and commercial in our ways of working, and lose the fresh simple-heartedness, the enthusiasm, and the swiftness and freedom of action, which are of such value to workers for Christ. The very dress in which we clothe ourselves for Christian service is apt to prove cumbersome and inflexible—like mail—instead of yielding softly to every movement of life. Conflicts arise between the old and the new; friends are divided; and power is wasted. The Lord, sweeping His eye over the world and on to remotest time, is divinely silent about machinery and outward arrangements, leaving every successive generation of His people free to work in the manner best adapted to providential circumstances.* Under such conditions the Apostle John shares the mission of the twelve, given on the eve of the Ascension.

Ten days elapsed from the Ascension to Pentecost, days which must have been full of a strange, undefined hope, kindled by the mysterious words of Jesus, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." These days were spent by the Apostles with one accord in prayer and supplication, probably in the same upper room where Jesus had appeared to them after His resurrection, and where He had breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John has his place in the

* One half of *our* legislation consists in repealing and re-forming past enactments: Christ's laws remain unchanged, never falling into desuetude, never requiring re-statement, as applicable and as sovran to-day as in the lifetime of the Apostles.

gathering, his name occurring in the list in its usual order, one of the first three, "Where abode Peter, and James, and John" (Acts i. 13).

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, all the disciples were present with one accord in one place—not the Apostles only, but all the followers of Jesus then in Jerusalem. Doubtless the very significance of the Feast of Pentecost would excite their hopes to a very high pitch. Suddenly there came a sound from above, like the sound of a rushing, mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting.* Following the mighty sound, perhaps ere it died into silence, there appeared unto them fire-like tongues, luminous but not burning, "distributing themselves" † severally on the disciples, a fire-tongue resting upon each. These were the external signs: the inward reality was this—"they were all filled with the Holy Ghost"; *all*, and not the Apostles only. The immediate result was that they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, these "other tongues" being simply languages which were different from the native language of the speakers, and which had been unknown to them until now they were filled with the Holy Ghost.

Of all the Jewish feasts, Pentecost was the most largely frequented by worshippers from foreign parts, and at this time devout Jews were sojourning in Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven. A very short time sufficed to spread abroad the news of what was now taking place. Naturally there arose great excitement and concourse; the multitude

---

* It seems impossible to determine the movements that must have taken place. What was "the house" in which they were sitting? Not an apartment within the Temple enclosure. Yet Peter's address cannot have been spoken in the "upper room." But we cannot follow the disciples from the place where they first met to the place where Peter addressed the multitudes.

† For that is what the historian says, and not "*cloven tongues.*"

came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language the wonderful works of God—doubtless those "wonderful works" which were associated with the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Various explanations were suggested, till at length Peter stood up with the Eleven, and lifted up his voice in that address which pricked the people in their hearts and resulted in the addition to the brotherhood of three thousand believing souls. The name of John is not mentioned, but as one of the Eleven he stood by the side of his brother Apostle—perhaps next him—thereby participating in and endorsing his testimony.

For some time afterwards Peter and John appear in association as friends, working in concert for the furtherance of the Gospel. The beginning of their fellowship lay far back. They both belonged to the town of Bethsaida. They had both been fishermen on the sea of Galilee. They had both been disciples of the Baptist. They had both been drawn to Jesus about the same time. They had both followed Him in His journeyings. They had kept together during the last scenes. It was Peter who beckoned to John to ask, "*Who is it?*" at the last supper. It was Peter and John (together with James) who went with Jesus into Gethsemane. It was John who spake to the damsel that kept the door and procured admittance for Peter into the high priest's palace. It was Peter and John to whom Mary Magdalene brought tidings of the empty sepulchre; and they both ran, by a common impulse, to examine it. And when Peter rose and followed Jesus by the sea of Galilee, John also followed unbidden. They keep company and work in concert still. It is difficult to define the sympathy or spiritual magnetism that drew and kept them together. They were widely unlike. They differed in age; there is every reason for thinking that Peter was much the elder

man.* They differed in their ways—the one now calm, contemplative, not given to ready speech or action; the other still blunt, outspoken, fervid, "rough, weather-beaten Peter." But it was a case in which two are better than one, each supporting the other and supplying what the other lacked.

The first instance of their association, brought under our notice in the book of Acts, is in the healing of a lame man at the gate of the temple. One afternoon, soon after Pentecost, they go up thither side by side at the hour of prayer. At the gate called Beautiful, the "gate of Nicanor," on the eastern side of the outermost court of the temple, there lay a man, above forty years of age, who had never walked. He was well known to the multitudes who frequented the temple, being laid there daily by his friends or others, who had compassion on him. By profession he was a beggar; and seeing the two apostles about to enter the temple, he would not lose the opportunity, but "asked an alms of them." The two apostles fastened their eyes upon him and said, "Look on us." The words were Peter's; but perhaps the more magnetic eyes were John's. The poor man gave heed, expecting to receive something; and he received more than he had asked for: "Silver and gold have I none," said Peter, "but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Immediately the man sprang to his feet, and clinging to Peter and John, holding their hands, one in each of his, entered the temple along with them, walking and leaping and praising God, with all a child's unrestrained delight. A

---

* "We talked with open heart, and tongue
Affectionate and true,
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two."
Wordsworth (*The Fountain*).

wondering crowd speedily surrounded the three, to whom Peter declared by whose power the man had been healed, and preached repentance and forgiveness through the very Blood that sinful hands had shed.

It is Peter who is spokesman, but John stands by his side, concurring in his words, and thereby bearing witness in behalf of Jesus.

The apostles are still speaking to the people when the captain of the temple, commanding the temple guard,* and the Sadducees, came upon them, apprehended them, and put them in hold until the morning. In the morning they are brought before the Council, which was dominated at the time by Sadducean influence, and the question is put to them by the president, "By what kind of power or by what kind of name have ye done this?" Peter at once answers that the cure had been wrought in the name of the crucified and risen Jesus, and proclaims Him the sole channel of salvation. Only the words of Peter are recorded, but John must have spoken also, for the "boldness," the free and brave speech of both, is said to have caused astonishment in the Council, not unmingled with perplexity, till they recollected that the two men "had been with Jesus."

After conferring among themselves, the Council can see nothing better to do (though it is a feeble conclusion) than to command the apostles not to speak at all nor to teach in the name of Jesus: a command to which the two apostles reply, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for to us it is impossible not to speak the things which we have seen and heard*—the words and works of Jesus. The command

* Certainly not Roman, but Levitical, preserving order and tranquillity.

of God cancels every command of man that stands opposed to it. This was a defiance to every earthly power and authority that would silence the preaching of the Gospel—as grand as "*Athanasius contra mundum*" was ever thought to be. Not knowing how to punish them, for fear of the people, the Council simply dismisses them with a threat; and being let go, they went unto their own company, and reported all that had taken place. With one accord, as if under a common inspiration, all joined with uplifted voices saying:

"Lord, Thou art He, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, 'Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.' For of a truth against Thy Holy Child * Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of Thy Holy Child Jesus."

A prayer grand in its very simplicity, with a tone of triumphant confidence in it, and grandly answered. The place in which they were assembled was shaken; they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; with boldness they spake the word of God; the whole body of believers were of one heart and of one soul, and shared their possessions in the free spirit of brotherly love; the Apostles witnessed to the resurrection

---

* Παῖδά, as to condition, *Servant.*

of the Lord Jesus with resistless power ; and great grace was upon them all.

Soon after these things, tidings that must have been at once surprising and joyful were brought to Jerusalem—that "Samaria had received the word of God." It had come about in this way. In the persecution that began on the day of Stephen's martyrdom,* the members of the church at Jerusalem were scattered abroad, except the Apostles; and wherever they went, they preached the Gospel. Among the scattered was Philip, one of the Seven, who went down to a city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them, doing many wonderful works at the same time. Doubtless the memory of Christ's own visit was not forgotten, and His words were fructifying ; and so Philip was called, not to prepare the soil for the reception of the seed, but to reap a harvest. The people with one accord gave heed to what he said, and the city was filled with joy. Among those who stood forward as believers was a man of the name of Simon, who beforetime used sorcery and bewitched the people, giving out that himself was some great one, but leaving it to imagination to say what. Imagination played its part, and the Samaritans from the least to the greatest regarded him as "*the great Power of God*"—somewhat as Christ is called "the Power of God" and "the Wisdom of God." When this man gave in his adhesion to Jesus of Nazareth, it seemed a mighty triumph of the Gospel, like the conversion of Saul of Tarsus shortly afterwards, or as if in more modern times a Voltaire or a Paine had become a humble believer.

When these things were reported in Jerusalem, the Apostles sent down the foremost two of their number, Peter and John, to Samaria, who when they were come, prayed for the believers whom Philip had baptized, that they might

* In Acts viii. 1, it is not "*At that time*," but "*In that day*," there arose a great persecution. The tiger has tasted blood.

receive the Holy Ghost. There is no warrant for the view that the mission of Peter and John arose from suspicion or incredulity respecting Philip's work. Rather it was designed that the church in Samaria should be livingly connected with apostolic ministry; and in the Divine purpose and arrangement, Samaria was the bridge to the Gentile world. One thing resulted from the visit that probably seemed very discouraging: the conversion of Simon Magus was shown to be spurious. When Simon saw that through laying-on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money to purchase the same power: to whom Peter answered in awful words, "Thy money perish with thee! because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." The poor man answers in words that look like repentance but are not, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me:" and there the curtain falls. Having finished their mission, Peter and John return to Jerusalem, evangelizing many villages of the Samaritans on their way.

From this point of time John is not seen in any outward movement recorded in the history. When his brother James is slain with the sword, there is no mention made of him. When Paul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem to confer with the Apostles respecting the obligation of the Mosaic law, he is indeed recognized as one of the "pillars,"* but he takes no part in the "much disputing" that arose on the

* Properly speaking, the expression marks the respect with which he was regarded *at the time when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians.* It is, "James, Cephas, and John, who seem (not *seemed*) to be pillars."

question, nor does he give forth his sentence as Peter and James do. On Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, "James and all the elders" are named, but there is silence as to John. When Church parties were formed, and one said, *I am of Paul*, and another, *I am of Apollos*, and another, *I am of Cephas*, and another, *I am of Christ*, we find no hint of any party calling itself after John's name. The fact would seem to be that he took but small share in outward movements, and appeared but seldom in the general eye,—his life flowing on deep and still. None the less profound and wide-reaching however would his influence be, that it was exerted so silently.

At what time he finally quitted Jerusalem, the New Testament does not inform us. Most probably it was soon after the death of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and before the troubles which resulted in the destruction of the city. It is possible he retired to Pella in north Gilead, when the Christians of Jerusalem took refuge there during the siege by the Romans. Whatever intermediate sojournings he may have made,* there seems no sufficient reason to doubt the tradition which reports him to have finally transferred his home to Ephesus.

No city in the world, not even Rome itself, could at that time have formed a better centre whence his apostolic influence should go forth. It had been the scene of the most fruitful of Paul's labours. The most heavenly of Paul's Epistles had been addressed to the saints there and in the surrounding region. The Gospel had taken deep root in it. It was the real metropolis of Asia Minor, and a city of great

---

* A vague notion got somewhat into currency that John once preached to the Parthians, and that his first Epistle was addressed to his converts among them. The earliest trace of this notion appears to be in the writings of Augustine who quotes from John's first epistle as "*the Epistle to the Parthians.*"

importance. Though now scarcely habitable,—the plain a pestilential swamp and the higher ground covered with jungle,—it then enjoyed "the finest sky and the sweetest climate in the world:" and health and plenty smiled around. It stood in connection with all the great thoroughfares of the world, east and west, north and south. It lay just in the great current of life; and its widely extended commerce drew to it a constant throng of visitors. Asia and all the realms toward the rising sun, Egypt and Libya and Cyrene, the Mediterranean with all its isles and shores, Greece and all Europe,—placed in Ephesus, the Apostle, as with the mighty-sounding trumpet of God, could summon them all, and invite them to Christ.

There were two tendencies in this region threatening the corruption of the Gospel, which had showed themselves as early as the time of Paul. On the one side there was Pharisaic legalism, asserting that unless men kept the law of Moses they could not be saved; on the other side there was the germ of Gnosticism, heathen at heart, which attempted a speculative solution of all theological problems, and at once fascinated and bewildered many a splendid intellect. The one tendency threatened to turn Christianity into little else than "baptized Judaism;" the other to make Jesus Christ merely the central phantom in a system of wild, misty dreams. The crowning service of John was to declare in words as wonderful for their childlike simpleness as for their depth and power, what he had seen and heard of the Lord, as the true antidote against both tendencies. The rich, fresh, fervid Christian life of the next century in that region (all drawbacks being allowed for) witnesses to the fulness with which he accomplished his work.

In the course of his residence here he was banished for a time to Patmos, a small, bleak, "disconsolate" islet in the Ægean Sea, of no note but for its connection with the

Apostle. It is less than twenty miles in circumference, and its population is not over seven thousand, about half being from the neighbouring islands. Peaked, ridged, precipitous, it shows well from the sea, particularly under the red glory of sunset; so also the outlook from it is noble—as from the poor, tame island of Iona, which bears to it such curious points of resemblance. It may have been a little greener centuries ago. Its Middle Age name, *Palmosa*, indicates the presence of palm-trees at some period, but it is now rugged and barren; and, with the exception of a few olives and cypresses, there is little or nothing to relieve the look of desolation which it wears.* On a small scale, it was a kind of local state prison during the reign of Domitian, like the Bass Rock in the days of the Scottish Covenanters; and here John was confined "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Tischendorf writes: "My soul was moved. Silent lay the little isle before me in the morning twilight. From its foot to its summit it is covered with groups of houses of light-grey stone: here and there an olive breaks the monotony of the rocky waste. The sea was still as the grave;

---

* In 1677, Joseph Georgirenes, Archbishop of Samos, says that it "is well stored with vines, fig trees, lemon and orange trees, and corn sufficient for the inhabitants, if they could only keep what they have free from the robbery of pirates." A recent account of it, by one who has resided in it, and knows every portion of it thoroughly, states that the produce is not now sufficient for the inhabitants. Whatever is grown in the island, however, is particularly fine and well-tasted. The school planted in the island was long renowned as one of the best in Greece. It was here that the Patriarch of Constantinople obtained the famous "Codex Alexandrinus" now in the British Museum. A political advantage possessed by the island over the neighbouring ones is that it has no Turkish governor, and its population is exclusively Greek. Tischendorf noted with astonishment that among the numerous manuscripts preserved in the island (and it is rich in such treasures), there was not a single document referring to the text of the Book of Revelation.—See his "Travels in the East" (*Excursion to Patmos*).

PATMOS.

ıtmos reposed in it like a dead saint. An inexpressible arm lay in the whole picture that surrounded me. *John* that is the thought of the island. The island belongs to m; it is his sanctuary. Its stones preach of him, and in ery heart he lives." Dr. E. D. Clarke thus describes a nset view of it: "Whatsoever, in the warmest fancies of y youth, imagination had represented . . . . . was not ıly realized, but surpassed. Let the reader picture to his ɔnception an evening sun, behind the towering cliffs of ıtmos, gilding the battlements of the Monastery of the pocalypse with its parting rays; the consecrated island rrounded by inexpressible brightness, seeming to float ɔon an abyss of fire; while the moon, in milder splendour, rising full over the opposite expanse. Such a scene I ːtually witnessed, with feelings naturally excited by all the rcumstances of local solemnity."

It is not absolutely certain at what time the Apostle's anishment took place; it may possibly have been as early s the close of Nero's reign, but more probably in the time f Domitian (81-96), whose gloomy, suspicious, and bitter ɔirit, made itself felt throughout the Empire. It would ɔate, if not entirely remove, certain difficulties connected ith the difference in language between the Book of Reveːtion and the Gospel, if we could place John's exile in the me of Nero; but there seems no good ground for doing ɔ. The testimony of Irenæus, whom it is not easy to elieve mistaken, is clear and unhesitating: "Not long is it ınce the Revelation was seen, but almost in our own geneːtion, about the end of Domitian's reign;"* and on the hole the preponderance of external evidence is on the ame side—only obscure and later testimonies being in ıvour of the earlier period.

* The suggestion that as *Domitian* was one of the names of Nero, renæus may have referred to him, will not bear serious consideration.

The duration of his exile—whether he was forced to labour in the quarries—how and when he was restored to liberty—and so on—we have no means of knowing. The one association of the island of which we have certainty is its association with the visions of the Apocalypse. Prisoners have solaced themselves in their solitude, or at least relieved the oppressive monotony, by many a strange device. They have learned to train insects, and to establish a kind of sympathy with them; they have watched the path of a ray of sunlight entering through some chink into their place of confinement, and slowly travelling over wall or floor; they have spent days in pouring water from one vessel into another, making some difference every time; they have carved the stones of their cells; they have cultivated prison flowers; they have written poems; and to a prison we owe the Dreamer's immortal allegory. For John the loneliness was filled with a mighty procession of scenes and figures; and the future, onward to the consummation, lived before him.

I have the idea that the opening vision—that of the glorified Christ—took place early in his banishment; and that the visions which followed were not crowded into the space of the single "Lord's day" referred to in the first chapter of Revelation, but were spread over the greater part of his exile. If so, the scenes would pass, not hurriedly and tumultuously, but slowly before him,—what we read in a few seconds filling (it may be) hours of time—with an interval between one scene and another, allowing full opportunity to "write" the things seen and the words and voices heard.

We may regard it as probable that his exile ended not later than the close of Domitian's reign; and that he then returned to the scene of his former labours and influence in the province of Asia. Tradition has filled in numerous and

grotesque details, but there is nothing that we can accept as historic.

We pass onward to the close of the first Christian century. The aged Apostle, now the last survivor of those who had seen the Lord, dwells among his "little children" at Ephesus, and exercises his influence and guidance from thence as a centre. The earthly Jerusalem has perished almost a generation ago. The terrible days of Nero have become a distant memory. The mild sway of Nerva has given peace to the Church. The splendid dawn of Trajan's reign has begun, himself just and clement, though determined to uphold the majesty of Roman law and religion. The gospel of Jesus Christ has laid extensive and powerful hold upon all the great centres of intelligence and influence round the shores of the Mediterranean. Not long after, the younger Pliny writes from Bithynia, what was probably true of all the western parts of Asia Minor, that "this contagious superstition," as he regards it, "was not confined to the cities, but had spread its infection among the country villages," and at one time "the temples were almost deserted." The explanation of this marvellous success given by the early Christians themselves is, doubtless, the true one—that God was exercising His power to save men through Jesus Christ. It was (so to speak) the continuation and extension of the day of Pentecost.

Though from the outset the Church was condemned as a "secret society," and Christianity a *religio illicita* that lay under the "ban of outlawry," yet for a time its obscurity was its protection!—Jesus was merely "*one Christus*" to them;—but now and for ages to come it was to be tried in the fire, by a series of persecutions fierce and almost uninterrupted, aiming at its extermination.

The persecution under Nero (so vividly described in

the Annals of Tacitus)* was merely the outburst of a savage and ferocious nature, not so much against Christianity as against men who were publicly odious and with whom nobody was likely to sympathize, and who therefore served as a convenient scapegoat to carry away public indignation from himself. Under Trajan, for the first time, the new religion was condemned by *express law.*† If Christianity could have been tolerant, it would have found no serious difficulty in obtaining toleration; for it was very much a matter of indifference to the ruling power what religion men were of, so long as they conformed to the State regulations, and practically submitted to the supremacy of Jupiter Capitolinus and the Emperor. As Gibbon puts it: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as

* The passage is this (*Tac. Annal.*, xv. 44): "To get rid of the report [that the firing of Rome was by his order], Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out, not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burned, to serve as a nightly illumination when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle."

† The punishable crime was *obstinacy* in adhering, contrary to law, to the new superstition. There were easy evasions for those who had easy consciences. A few grains of incense cast upon a heathen altar would secure pardon. It was held undesirable to hunt for Christians, and informers were discouraged. But the profession of Christianity was illegal.

equally useful; and thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord."

But at every point the religion of Christ came into collision with what existed round about it. The Christian by his conduct accused and condemned the current morality. He stood up against the whole life of the world, and its ways. He could not be present at the celebration of heathen rites. He could not sit down at heathen banquets. He could not salute the statues of the gods, or cast incense upon their altars. He absented himself from shows, gladiatorial contests, religious fêtes, and all assemblies that tended to licentiousness. He thus ostracised himself from society; and his whole bearing was felt as an indignity to the sentiments of his neighbours and friends. Of course the world could not like him, and the world showed practically that it did not. For a time the persecutions were social rather than political, and it was not till the followers of Christ became numerous and influential that the arm of the civil power had to be exerted for putting them down. These days were now at hand.

At the same time dangers were rising *within* the Church, through the spirit of presumptuous speculation which loosened itself from conscience and reality, and which, out of Oriental fancies, Greek philosophy, and Gospel history, fashioned systems as fantastic, shifting, and unsubstantial as cloud-scenery at sunset.

In these circumstances the saintly Apostle, full of years, and ripe in experience and wisdom, wrote his Gospel and Epistles—the last and richest treasure of sacred literature. Judging from internal marks, I would set some of these writings down at an earlier date, as the product of his noble prime; but let the slight tradition stand which binds at least their publication to the close of the century or the beginning of the next. He does not in these writings attack error as

a controversialist, who deals with fragments and detached assertions instead of wholes, but rather exhibits the positive truth in the presence of which error expires. The central thought, ruling all he says, is that of "the Word made flesh," "the Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us," whom he exhibits coming forth out of His eternity, passing through this mortal life, and again entering into that glory which He had with the Father before the world was, with the added glory of Redeemer.* According to the representation of Chrysostom, the Evangelist made ready his soul, as some well-fashioned and jewelled lyre, yielded for the utterance of something great and sublime to the Spirit. These writings are the crowning gift of Jesus Christ to the churches, bestowed through the instrumentality of His holy Apostle.

We must be content to leave the closing years unknown. It is a safe enough inference—and it is all we can maintain —that the general guidance of the churches, in thought and life, devolved on him, and that he was faithful even to the last.†

We are ignorant of the time and circumstances of his death. Conjecture ranges from A.D. 89 to A.D. 120. Chrysostom affirms that he was a hundred years old when he wrote his Gospel, and that he lived full twenty years after. It does not appear that he died by violence, but peacefully upon his bed, most probably in Ephesus, amidst his "little children." One likes to imagine the tranquillity of the last scenes, in keeping with the tenor of his life.

> "The night-dews fall not gentlier on the ground,
> Nor weary, worn-out winds expire so soft."

---

* Hence he is called John *the Divine, i.e.,* not the theologian, but one who spoke and wrote of the Divinity of the Lord.

† Some of the legends and traditions respecting him are thrown together in an Appendix—enough to serve as a specimen.

In all likelihood, his dust lies somewhere amidst the wild jungle that has overspread the neighbourhood. With the setting of "that last Resplendence" the age of common history begins. The churches found it difficult to believe that he had really passed away; the saying had gone abroad among them that he should not die, but should continue until the appearing of the Lord; and so in course of time the legend already alluded to was framed—that he was not really dead, but only sleeping in his grave.* As has been said, it was not wholly an error; for "he lives and will ever live by his writings, and the future belongs to him even more than the past."

Though the last of the Apostles had gone, it was not "night," with only far-off stars in the "dun and naked sky": the great Presence remained, according to the assurance given on the eve of the Ascension, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"; and the blessed "Comforter" carried on His gracious work, so that as truly as ever the Gospel was preached "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

---

* See page 62.

V.

The Seer.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IT AND JOHN'S OTHER WRITINGS. THE VISION OF THE LORD. PATMOS. THE SEVEN CHURCHES. THE APOCALYPSE THE ONE PROPHETIC BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION. STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK.

THE New Testament writings ascribed to John are the Gospel which bears his name, three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation or Unveiling. It is impossible with certainty to determine the dates at which they were severally composed, but the preponderance of evidence indicates the Book of Revelation as the earliest.

About no New Testament book have wider and more numerous diversities of opinion arisen, whether as regards authorship, date, occasion, meaning, or value. Merely to exhibit these diversities would require a volume by itself. From the first, the great majority of Christians have received it as certainly a genuine work of the Apostle, while a few, both in the past and now, have contended for a John who was not an apostle;* and others have asserted and attempted

* I am not satisfied of the correctness of the view that John the Apostle and John the Presbyter were different persons. The proof seems to me to break down at a critical point. And I cannot but think that those who believe in the two are more easily convinced than they take credit for.

to prove that it is a forgery in the Apostle's name. At the time of the Reformation, Luther pronounced it to be neither apostolic nor prophetical; and though he afterwards expressed himself less strongly, his judgment was not materially altered. It would be easy to make out a list of able men since Luther's time who have, for different reasons, consented to his conclusion. The book certainly differs greatly from the other writings of John, both in style, tone of mind, and standpoint. The difference is not simply that between youth and age,—between an unripened imagination and the calm and softened light of maturity,—but of another kind.

The difference seems to me to spring in part from the difference of *subject:* in one case the serene and holy manifestation of the Eternal Life; in the other case the throne, the Lamb, the powers of darkness, the conflict, judgment and plague and woe, and all the mingled events that take place onward to the establishment of the New Jerusalem. In part also, and still more largely, from the difference of *mental mood:* in one case the aged Apostle telling calmly forth, as to his little children,—on some "sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright"—what he had held in sacred remembrance for a long life-time; in the other case the son of thunder rapt in ecstasy, and thrown back into the language of his youth. In part also the difference seems to me *designed*, in order to connect the prophecy more evidently and perfectly with the ancient Scriptures. The very names applied to God are Old Testament names. Nowhere do we meet the "*Abba, Father*" of the New Covenant; it is the "Lord God of the holy prophets," "the Lord God Almighty;" and here alone (xi. 15), in the whole range of apostolic writings, is the name "*Our Lord*" applied to the Father. Thus, in Gospel and Apocalypse, are the two poles of his

nature exhibited; otherwise there would be incompleteness in the use made of him.

If there are differences, there are also deep, subtle, and peculiar harmonies, which can only be accounted for by identity of authorship. It is as if one and the same voice should sing at one time a wild battle-ode, and by and by a low, sweet song of home love, that looks into immortality, like the "*Land o' the Leal.*"* On the whole, as the result of critical examination and the weighing of historic evidence, the earliest view is again almost universally accepted, and the book is received as emanating from the Apostle. Even the doubting school has come generally to allow its apostolic origin, endorsing the statement that "hardly one book of the New Testament has such a list of historical witnesses marked by name on its behalf."

It was while exiled in Patmos, during the reign of Domitian, that John beheld the visions which he recorded in this book. The book, therefore, has its historical mooring, and does not "swim in the air." Being in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, the Apostle heard a great voice, as of a trumpet, talking with him, a voice loud, clear, and articulate; and turning round, he saw seven golden candlesticks or lampstands, and in the midst of them the glorified Redeemer, appearing, as in the prophetic vision of Daniel

---

* It is to the music of a battle-ode, only with a change from triumphant to pathetic, that Lady Nairn's exquisite lyric goes:—

"I'm wearin' awa', John,
Like snaw-drift in thaw, John;
I'm wearin' awa'
To the land o' the leal.
There's nae sorrow there, John;
There's neither cauld nor care, John;
The day's aye fair
I' the land o' the leal."

"Our bonny bairn's there, John;
She was baith gude and fair, John;
And oh, we grudged her sair
To the land o' the leal.
But sorrow's sel' wears past, John,
And joy's a-comin' fast, John,
The joy that's aye to last
I' the land o' the leal."

by the side of the great river Hiddekel, like unto a son of man. Psychologists tell us how, under certain conditions, the emotions and images of the mind so overpower the senses as to press them into service, and force them to give expression to what is passing within the bosom. It was nothing of this kind here, so far as the narrative indicates; but a true beholding of the Lord. He was robed even to the foot, like a king-priest, in white, and girt with a golden girdle; His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow; His eyes gleamed as a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; His voice was majestic as the sound of many waters; in His right hand He held seven stars; out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword; His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength:—"and when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." With the touch of His right hand He restored strength to His servant, and bade him write what he now saw, and the visions which were about to be unfolded to him, sending his book to the seven churches of Asia.

We are not to suppose that only seven churches and no more existed in that province. The probability is that they were much more numerous. But these seven are singled out as representative churches. The number Seven is the covenant number, for which reason it is also seized upon by the Wicked One, and worked into the anti-christian system. The churches are divided into two groups of three and four, by *the build* of the Epistles addressed to them as well as by geographical situation, the first group lying toward the sea, the second more inland. They form a kind of symbolical circle.* I take

* Concerning the number Seven as symbolical, made up of three and four, perpetually meeting us not only in Revelation, but in the page of nature, see an interesting chapter in *The Symbolical Numbers of Scripture,*

it that a copy of the Apocalypse was sent to each of these churches, and with each copy a short Epistle to the particular church, the whole being collected in the second and third chapters. The words spoken by Christ and written down by John, are "what the Spirit saith." At the close of each Epistle, "he that hath an ear"—each individual man—is summoned to listen. The words are addressed "to the churches." What a sweep that gives them—to the churches—the wide world over, and down all time!

As our waking thoughts are the stuff out of which our dreams are fashioned, so the imagery of Revelation has for its base partly the Apostle's own experiences and memories, and partly the Temple services at Jerusalem, the history of his nation, and the writings of ancient Prophets. The white cloud, the earthquake, the thunderings and lightnings, the great hail, the rainbow round about His head, the sound of many waters, every mountain and island, the great mountain as it were burning with fire, the sea, the sand on its shore, the sea of glass like unto crystal, the sea of glass as it were mingled with fire, and so on—all this various imagery would be most natural in Patmos.

The Apocalypse is the one prophetic book of the New Testament. It throbs with the martyr-spirit throughout. Milton describes it as "the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and mingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies." Being written after the destruction of Jerusalem, we cannot make it refer to that catastrophe, and to a hoped-for golden age beyond. Its design is, by "signifying," or

by Malcolm White, M.A. (*T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.*) The influence of the Apocalypse is seen in the building of "churches" in groups of seven—as, *e.g.*, at Glendalough or Clonmacnoise in Ireland.

exhibiting in sign, things that should shortly come to pass, to inspire the Christian church with hope and courage and patience, indicating her future course, through calm and storm, onwards to the glorious appearing of the Lord and the final victory over all hostile powers, when His saved people shall enter on untroubled and eternal joy. Without the Apocalypse, the Bible would be an unfinished Book, nor should we know the issue of the conflict between God and evil. "One voice alone," as Herder says, "prevails throughout it, *The Lord comes;* one feeling, that *God is all in all.*" "Behold, He cometh with clouds," meets us in the beginning; while again in the close He gives the assurance, "Behold, I come quickly."

Discussions—sometimes fierce and bitter—have arisen under various questions, such as these: Is the book a prophetic poem, whose imagery must not be taken too strictly? or is it prophecy in the true sense? If it is prophecy, how far are the descriptions to be understood literally? and how far figuratively? If the book is written in cipher, where shall we find the key? Looking at the numbers seven, ten, a thousand, and so on—are they ordinary numbers? or are they "prophetic"? or are they symbolical? Was the prophecy fulfilled, in the main, in the early ages of Christianity, in the conflicts with Judaism and Paganism? Was Christianity "triumphant" when it was made the state religion by Constantine? Or is the fulfilment proceeding at the present hour? and is it possible to discover our own place in the prophecy? Or does the book foretell events that are still—all of them—wholly future? Or will it be impossible to understand the prophecy till it is completely fulfilled? Under these questions the various ways in which the book has been taken group themselves.

To some it is merely an inspired poem, setting forth

ideas after the Eastern fashion, but not prophetic in any real sense.

To others it appears wholly fulfilled in the early days of Christianity, and we are now living in the time of the New Jerusalem—the communion of those who are born from above.*

To others it delineates the whole of human history, in its connection with the kingdom of Christ, from the days of the Apostle (if not from Eden onwards) to the general Judgment. The whole march and procession—the whole ebb and flow—of Time is represented to the Christian imagination, the central figure being that of the once suffering and now glorified Christ, who governs history, who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, by whom and for whom are all things, and who is the appointed Judge of the living and the dead.

To others the main part of the prophecy, from the fourth chapter and onwards, is wholly future. The Epistles to the Seven Churches are prophetic of so many successive stages of Christian history, running the one into the other, the issue being, that while the few faithful are blessed with Christ, the visible ecclesiastical community is "spued" out of the Saviour's mouth. The visions commencing with the fourth chapter are held to pertain wholly to the future, though with illustrations in the present—as the Old Testament prophecies of Christ had illustrations in typical men and typical events; and when the fulfilment comes, it will

* Those who take this view find, for example, in Nero the Wild-beast. His name when Hebraized gives the mysterious number 666. It was believed by many that he was not really dead, but had retired beyond the Euphrates, whence he would return again. The waters of the Euphrates are dried up to make a way for him. With his ten satraps he burns and destroys the city of Rome. The whole book is interpreted in harmony with such ideas.

be crowded within the strict literal limits of the years and days named in the book.*

Two things I would say: First, we must in our interpretation take warning from the errors of the disciples, when, by observing *the letter*, they missed the true *meaning* which Christ conveyed. Second, the Apocalypse is not a book for the mere arithmetician, far less for the fortune-teller, out of which might be constructed a "Haydn's Dictionary of Dates" for the future; but as truly a book for the devout and spiritually-minded theologian as is the Epistle to the Romans. It is full of Christ. Nowhere does He seem more human, nowhere more Divine; nowhere more gracious, nowhere more majestic and awful. Bengel has well called it "a Book of the Cross;"† and, almost as well, Herder speaks of it as containing "manna for all hearts and all ages," and "a book of instruction and comfort for all churches in which Christ walks."

It is not a *new* prophecy, but the old, from another standpoint and under fuller light. John sees the same things that had been seen long before; the unexhausted words of ancient seers, from Moses downwards, are taken up and uttered afresh. Speaking roundly, everything that is in the Apocalypse is to be found (in germ at least—sometimes fully) in the Old Testament. Thus the New Testament becomes "*committed*" (so to speak) to the unfulfilled prophecies of the Old. These unfulfilled prophecies have not come to nought; they do but bide their time.

---

* Some extreme Futurists hold that even the Seven Churches have not yet appeared, and will not until immediately before the end.

† Yet Bengel interpreted the book in such a way that he fixed the true and exact date of the binding of Satan and commencement of the Millennium for the month of June, 1836.

The structure of the book, excluding introduction and conclusion, may now be briefly indicated. There are three divisions of unequal length. The first gives an account of the appearing of the glorified Jesus to John in Patmos; the second consists of the epistles which John was instructed to write and send to the Seven Churches; the third and by far the longest records the visions of the future which the seer beheld.

These visions (chapters iv.—xxii.) do not flow on continuously, in even current, like the chapters of a history, till we reach the last; but the eye of the seer sweeps again and again over the same space, so that we have so many parallel lines of symbol rather than a single continuous line from John's day to the consummation.

The vision recorded in chapter iv. is introductory to the rest. A door is opened in heaven; a trumpet-voice calls to the seer in Patmos "*Come up hither!*"; and "immediately I was in the Spirit" (Rev. iv. 2), in presence of those "heavenly things" after the pattern of which tabernacle and temple had been built. There is a Throne, high and lifted up, with One sitting upon it whose appearance was like a jasper and a sardine stone. The throne is compassed with an emerald-coloured bow. Around are four-and-twenty elders, clothed in white and wearing golden garlands. Out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunderings. Seven lamps of fire burn before it. In front, within the circle of the elders, is as it were a sea of glass like crystal. Midway up the throne-steps ("in the midst") are four living creatures, with eyes before and behind, differing and yet like, who cease not to cry, "*Holy, Holy, Holy,*" and are responded to by the elders, who fall down before Him that sits upon the throne, and cast their garlands at His feet, saying, "Thou art worthy." Whatever changes of scene and imagery we find throughout the book, the Throne never shifts.

The first series of visions, following the introductory one, is that of the Sealed Book (chapters v.—viii. 1). A book or roll sealed with seven seals lies on the open right hand of Him who sits on the throne. No one is able to open it or to look thereon until the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, has prevailed or overcome so that He takes and opens it. His taking the book calls forth praises and thanksgivings with this for their burden, "Worthy is the Lamb!" A vision follows the opening of each seal, till the seventh and last is opened, when there is silence in heaven as for the space of half-an-hour. We are brought up to the very verge of the Lord's coming; but the event itself is not described. The series of visions leads us to the threshold, and there pauses.

The second series of visions is given in chapters viii. 2—xi. Seven angels with trumpets are seen standing before God. An angel, having a golden censer with much incense, whose smoke ascends with the prayers of saints before God, takes his place by the golden altar before the throne. He fills the censer with altar-fire, and casts it upon the earth. His act is followed by voices, thunderings, lightnings, and shaking. The seven angels then sound their trumpets in succession, the Seer describing what follows the sounding of each, and what is preparatory to the sounding of the next. When the seventh angel sounds, voices in heaven proclaim, "The kingdom of the world is become [the kingdom] of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." The elders fall on their faces and give thanks, because "Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power and hast reigned." The temple of God is opened in heaven (as when the vail of the temple was rent in twain), and the ark of His covenant is seen; and there are lightnings, voices, thunderings, shaking, and great hail.

The third series of visions begins with the woman, the serpent, the Man-child (the woman's seed), and carries us on to the reaping of the harvest and vintage of earth. These visions occupy chapters xii.—xiv. They close with the appearing of a white cloud, and One seated on it like a son of man, golden-garlanded, and with a sharp sickle in his hand. An angel from the temple cries aloud to Him to thrust in His sickle and reap the earth's ripened *harvest;* and He reaps. Another angel from the altar (the fire-angel) cries aloud to one who had come out of the temple, having a sharp sickle, to thrust in his sickle and reap the earth's ripened *vintage;* he reaps, and casts the clusters into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. The wine-press is trodden without the city, and blood comes out of the wine-press even to the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The fourth series of visions (that of the Vials, chapters xv., xvi.) preserves in part the imagery of the third, and follows it up. A sea of glass is seen, mingled with fire; and standing there (like Israel on the farther shore of the Red Sea) are those who have gotten the victory. Harp in hand, they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The temple of the tabernacle of the covenant in heaven is then opened, and seven angels issue forth, clothed in pure and white linen, with golden girdles, bearing in their hands seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, which they are commanded to pour out upon the earth. They obey, and pour out their vials in succession. When the seventh is poured out, a voice from the throne cries, "*It is done.*" Voices, thunders, lightnings follow, and a mighty shaking. The great city is divided into three parts; the cities of the nations fall; great Babylon comes in remembrance before God, to receive her cup of wrath. The islands and mountains flee away, and there

falls on men a great hail, and they blaspheme God because of the plague of hail.

The fifth series of visions occupies chapters xvii.—xix. 10. One of the seven angels who had the seven vials full of wrath carries the seer in spirit into the wilderness, and shows him the judgment of the great harlot, drunken with the blood of saints. She is identified with that great city, Babylon, that rules over the kings of the earth. A great "*Alas!*" rises from all the earth at the fall of Babylon, while away up in heaven is a rejoicing "*Alleluia.*" A glimpse is then given of the bride, the Lamb's wife, arrayed in fine linen, pure and white, symbolic of the righteousness of saints. And "blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The next series of visions (xix. 11—xxi. 8) describes the final conflict and victory. The Faithful and True rides forth on a white horse at the head of the armies of heaven; He Himself is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; His followers in fine linen, pure and white. Arrayed against Him are the Wild Beast, the False Prophet, the kings of the earth and their armies. Ere the battle commences, an angel standing in the sun summons all the fowls of heaven to gather together to the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings and captains and mighty men and horses and their riders. The battle is joined; the Beast and the False Prophet are taken and cast into a lake of fire; and the remnant are slain, and all the fowls of the air are filled with their flesh.

After this an angel comes down from heaven, with a key and a great chain, and binds the Dragon, (that old Serpent, the Devil,) and shuts him up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years.

Then thrones are seen; and to those who sit on them judgment is given. The souls of them who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as did not worship the Beast nor his image, nor receive his mark in forehead or hand, live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is the First Resurrection.

At the end of the thousand years, Satan is loosed from his prison, and goes forth again to deceive the nations. He succeeds in gathering them to war against the Lamb; and they compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. Fire comes down from heaven and destroys them. The Devil who deceived them is also cast (like the Beast and the False Prophet before him) into the lake of fire.

Then is seen a Great White Throne, and One sitting thereon, from whose face earth and heaven flee away. It is the Throne of Judgment; and the dead, small and great, are gathered before it, and judged every man according to his works. Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, together with all whose names were not found written in the Lamb's book of life.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." The holy city, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. A great voice out of heaven cries, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

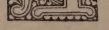
The final vision (xxi. 9—xxii. 5) is that of the New usalem itself, viewed in its historical manifestation. It "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and ker is God." The vision is not a mere enlargement of . 2—4. The Seer is transported by one of the seven gels that had the seven last plagues to a great and high untain; and looking forward, as it were, from his own sent into the far distance, he sees "that great city, the y Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having glory of God." In its historic beginning it is repre- ted as contemporaneous with the existence of "nations" the earth, and nations that require "healing." It has a nistry of grace for these nations. As for the inhabitants mselves, there is an end of all the evil consequences of fall. "There shall be no more curse; but the throne God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants ll serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His ne shall be in their foreheads: and there shall be no ht there; and they need no candle, neither light of the : for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall gn for ever and ever."

"He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I ie quickly. Amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus."

VI.

The Evangelist.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. BATTLE-FIELD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. RELATION TO THE OTHER GOSPELS. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTENTS. HOW IT IMPRESSES DIFFERENT MEN. THE PROLOGUE. EXPOSITION OF THE PROLOGUE.

 S intelligent readers of the New Testament are aware, each of the four Gospels exhibits its special character in its very commencement; each, so to speak, carries a mark on its forehead: this is pre-eminently the case with the Gospel according to John. They who propose to themselves to study this Gospel must be content to take time, so that they may live into the knowledge of it. It is not possible to write anything like a "Handy Book" on it. And after the study of a whole life, there will still remain unfathomable depths into which we can only gaze with wonder and fascination.

This Gospel has been rightly described as in our day "the Battle-field of the New Testament." And the battle is not merely one in which intellect plays its part, but also the forces of passion. If the book can be proved a forgery, the citadel of the supernatural is "commanded" by its assailants.

After weighing what has been written—and so eagerly urged of late—against the Johannine origin of this Gospel, I am unable to see that the evidence in its favour has been so much as shaken. It does not however belong to my aim to deal with this question; indeed, to enter into it, even slightly, would require a separate book. The writer of the Gospel certainly professes to have been an eye-witness of the things which he records, and as good as calls himself John. In addition, the same hand that wrote the Gospel unquestionably wrote also the First Epistle (as both external and internal evidence show), in which the distinctest possible assertion is made of the writer's having been a personal witness of the manifestation. If then he was not a witness, I cannot acquit him of the worst kind of "lie," all the more abominable that it is a lie against God, the effect of which is to represent a creature as His equal; and I cannot help quoting against him—shuddering as I do it—the words of that John whom he simulates, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

This Gospel is not a mere supplement to the other three, filling in vacant spaces—such a view is both unwarranted and superficial—though, coming last, the Evangelist could not but take note of what the other three said, and did not say; nor is it an Eirenicon designed to reconcile differences within the Church; nor a controversial treatise aimed against incipient or manifested heresies (although it serves all the ends thus indicated); but is the "testimony" of one whom Jesus loved, who "leaned on His bosom," who "beheld His glory," and was "moved" to write by the Holy Spirit. In all probability it was given to the churches just when they might be sorrowfully wondering what they should do if this last of the Apostles were removed from them, and his testimony faded into a memory or a tradi-

tion; their only comfort being that he might tarry till the Lord's return.*

It records the greatest of the miracles,† the longest and profoundest of the discourses, and that unfathomable prayer which preceded Gethsemane.‡ There is little of outwardness and physical action in it; in which respect it contrasts strikingly with Mark. The parabolic element, except in occasional glimpses, is almost entirely a-wanting; and we find instead the simple, profound, and profoundly-connected sayings of the Lord, the exceeding delicacy and beauty of which have been most wonderfully caught. It tells us more than the other three about the risen life. More also about the Comforter and His work, both as respects "the world" and believers. It is a well of living water, that fills again as we draw from it, and is inexhaustible.

Printed by itself, it forms but a very small volume, which

---

* The Apostle Paul, we know, did not write out his Epistles with his own hand, but employed an amanuensis. It is quite conceivable that the aged John, in writing, received the assistance of younger men who were associated with him in Christian service, and that the Greek in which he writes receives a tinge and character from this assistance. None the less would the book be to us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

† Seven in number, no two the same in kind.

‡ It has been objected that John could not possibly have retained these discourses in his memory, in such minuteness and fulness, for so many years. The true answer to this objection is the Lord's promise of the Spirit, *to bring all things to remembrance.* Subsidiary to this, however, there are various considerations that deserve to be weighed, as, *e.g.* :—(1.) Where writing is little used, the wonderful strength that memory attains. (2.) There is nothing incredible, or even unlikely, in the supposition of John's having used *memoranda*; or that the book took its final form only by a very slow process—indeed, by a process of growth. (3.) John did not, any more than the other Evangelists, act as a mere verbal reporter, but reproduced the sense livingly. (4) The very length of time that elapsed, filled up as it was in telling of Jesus again and again, in thought and contemplation, and in deepening experience, would render it not more difficult but more easy to give his full and final testimony. Any one may find analogies within his own knowledge.

can easily be carried in the waistcoat pocket, and read from beginning to end at a single sitting. There is nothing in it that looks like striving after effect. The sublimest truths are set forth apparently without effort. The language is extremely simple and unartificial, yet answering to the requirements of profoundest speculative thought. A wonderful serenity breathes all through. No book of the New Testament does so much to captivate the reader's affections —it is so simple, so tenderly human, so heavenly, so penetrated by the spirit of love, so satisfying to the longings that reach out toward God. There is nothing in it like the Sermon on the Mount, or the Epistle of James; there are no chapters such as we find in the writings of Paul, within which "the melting fire" burns; there is no gorgeous colouring, or strange, weird imagery, as in the Apocalypse; but beyond all other New Testament books it wins the heart. Even when we forget the words, the echo of them lingers with us, like grave, sweet melody.

The readers are presumed to be unfamiliar with the Palestine of Christ:—hence the little explanatory notes that are so often thrown in respecting names and customs, such as, "The Passover, a feast of the Jews;" "Rabboni, which is to say, Master."

The present fashion of illustrating the life of Jesus (and the lives of Peter and Paul and John) is to bring together all that can be learned respecting topography, scenery, historic associations, and the like, so as to make the narrative more vivid. We get extremely interesting reading in this way; but now and then the information supplied affords little more help to an understanding of the Christ of God than if a historian of the Peninsular war were to illustrate the career of Wellington by telling us of the geology and botany of his various battle-fields, and the plumage of the birds that are found along his lines of march. In this Gospel is none of this

irrelevancy of information, for the mere sake of pictorial effect. It is the spiritual, and not the outward, all through.

The book presupposes acquaintance with the Gospel story, and therefore does not give a complete outline of the Lord's public ministry—just as Peter in the house of Cornelius assumes that his hearers were acquainted with the facts that underlie the message of mercy: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, *that word ye know.*" It is, at the same time, an original and fresh forth-setting of His Personality and Life, designed to lift our thoughts of Him to the very highest elevation. In some sense He is, in this Gospel, *transfigured before us.* It ought to be read in the light of its declared purpose, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name;" and every commentary upon it should lie in the line of that declaration—in other words, should aim at leading men into the knowledge which is life eternal.

Jesus Christ is not here the Son of Abraham and David, as in Matthew; nor Jehovah's Servant, as in Mark;* nor the Son of Adam, as in Luke; but the Only-begotten of the Father. In the very outset we are taken back into the past eternity, or, as John names it, "the Beginning," to behold "the Word" who was with God, and was God, the ground and cause of all creature-existence. In the fulness of time the Word is made flesh and dwells among us, full of grace and truth. The mystery of the Incarnation comes before us in this Gospel as in none of the others. Elsewhere we

---

* As indicated in the very outset, by the opening quotation, Mark's Gospel is to be connected with Isaiah's great prophecy of "the Servant of Jehovah," chaps. xl.—xlvi.

see the Holy Child wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger; angels hymn His birth; the aged Simeon takes Him in his arms as God's Salvation; the Eastern Magi offer Him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; the Child in the home of Nazareth grows in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man; the Boy of twelve must be about His Father's business.

But in John's Gospel all this is passed over. There is no hint referring to His childhood at all. The broad fact of the Incarnation being declared, the Evangelist proceeds at once to describe the forthshowing of His glory. This is the theme of the book. It is the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father. He is introduced by the Baptist as "One whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose;" as the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;" as One "who cometh from above," and who "is above all." Immediately He begins to gather disciples by His Divine self-disclosures and graciousness, and His Messiah-career proceeds. The contents of the book, from the calling of the first disciples, onward to the week preceding His crucifixion, may be indicated in a single sentence:—The miracle at Cana; the purifying of the temple; the interview with Nicodemus; the interview with the Samaritan woman; the healing of a nobleman's son; a discourse growing out of the cure of an impotent man; another growing out of the multiplying of the bread and the walking on the sea; another at the feast of tabernacles, in the middle of which is inserted the account of the woman taken in adultery; another growing out of the miracle of opening the eyes of one born blind;* another at the feast of dedication in winter; and lastly, the great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. It is life all through, light all through, grace all through,

* The beginning of chapter x. seems a continuation of chapter ix.

truth all through, glory all through—glory which to the Apostle (after the rending of the vail of flesh) is visible from first to last, in every part of the Lord's career.

From the period marked by the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus ceases to walk openly among the Jews. The remainder of the Gospel (ten chapters out of twenty-one) deals with the closing scenes, beginning "six days before the passover." We go with Him from Bethany to Jerusalem; we join the throng on the day of the Triumphal Entry; we are with Him in the upper room; we are taken through the last sufferings; we see a specimen of His risen life; and His glory shines forth throughout, even in the blackest hour of hell's seeming triumph.

There is no mention made in this Gospel of some of the great events in His life which are detailed by the other Evangelists, and with which John was intimately acquainted. He knew, for example, of the victory over the Tempter in the wilderness; he was present at the Transfiguration on the holy mount, and had a glimpse of the kingdom in its power; he saw Jairus' daughter restored to life; he knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane; he was one of the band that accompanied the Lord as far as Bethany on the day of Ascension; but he makes no direct mention of these events in his narrative.

The materials which he has actually made use of are few in number compared with the store from which he might have drawn; he omitted many things, the record of which might have over-filled the world with books; with only a few selections from his rich treasury, he shows us the glory of the Incarnate Word—as if a painter should take a bit of grey rock, a tuft of maidenhair fern growing in a crevice, some patches of grass and heather, a tree or two, a human figure, a dim-seen mountain range, the infinite blue sky, and putting these into a picture should show us the glory of God

in nature. His Gospel, as a whole, is the record of a glory that shone forth from first to last during the earthly manifestation of the Son of God,—a glory not for the senses, but for the heart.

The student of the Epistle to the Romans will feel that he is here addressed from another side. It depends on one's nature more than on his logical powers what he shall find in this Gospel. Very remarkable is it how little children and ripe Christians, the simplest minded and the deepest minded, all like it with so profound a liking. To the mere logician it is one of the most obscure and perplexing writings that can be taken up; to the little child and the child-hearted saint, it is one of the easiest and most delightful. As, in the twilight of a day in September, one may cast a hasty, careless glance across the sky and see only a bright star shining here and there, while if he gazes steadfastly in some one direction for a little time, world after world, at first invisible, will shine forth to him from the blue depths; so, to him who looks long and earnestly into this book, glory after glory will disclose itself, till his whole spiritual sky is one wide field of light, while at the same time a sense of infinite mystery steals over him, and a strangely mingled longing and awe.

No part of the New Testament is a more intolerable offence to some, and none is more dearly loved by others. "It is of little use," says one, "to the Christians of our day." Another speaks of it as "chilling," and "calculated to repel rather than attract the mind." The Straussian school finds it a forgery of the second century, and regards it very contemptuously—as do their successors. Renan, acknowledging it to come from the Apostle John, though perhaps changed by other hands, speaks of it as "a singular production," a "strange Gospel," in which "the character of Jesus is falsified in many points,"—the apparent aim of the

Evangelist being to gratify his personal dislike by running down Judas, and his personal jealousy by exposing Peter; while "perfect good faith was not always his rule." John Stuart Mill finds in it a good deal of "poor stuff."

On the other hand, the affection and admiration expressed towards it by others are almost unbounded. One has called it "the heart of Christ;" another, "the gospel of the Spirit;" another says, "It is written by the hand of an angel;" another, "It is the chief of the Gospels, and one can understand it only by reclining on the bosom of Jesus;" another, "It is sweeter and more charming, and endowed with more power to attract, than all the harmonies of music;" another, "It speaks a language to which no parallel whatever is to be found in the whole compass of literature;" another, "It is a deep and tranquil lake, in which are reflected the pleasant shores around, and the pure, clear sky, with sun, moon, and stars above;" another, "The simplicity is that of a seraph, and the love such as blossoms around the eternal throne of the blessed Son of God;" another, "It breathes the loftiest spiritual tone;" and another, "It stands out from the other three as the Sabbath among the days of the week, as the office of the priesthood among the functions of the sons of Levi, or like the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, which was better than the vintage of Abiezer."

Very striking are the words of Matthias Claudius: "I love best of all to read in St. John. There is in him something so perfectly wonderful—dusk and night, and the quick lightning throbbing through them: the soft clouds of evening, and behind the mass the big full moon bodily; something so sad, so high, so full of presage, that one can never weary of it! In reading John, it always seems to me that I see him before me, reclining at the Last Supper on the bosom of the Lord, as if his angel held the light for me,

and at certain parts would place his arm around me, and whisper something in my ear. I am far from understanding all I read, yet often John's idea seems to hover before me in the distance; and even when I look into a place that is entirely dark, I have a presension of a great, glorious meaning, which I shall some day understand, and hence I catch so eagerly at every new exposition of the Gospel of John." *

The best "Introduction" to this Gospel is the introduction written by the Evangelist himself. It is comprised in a paragraph of eighteen verses, and exhibits in a condensed form the whole significance, scope, and intent of the book. It runs as follows:—

"In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the Beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of men. And the Light shineth in the Darkness; and the Darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John: the same came for witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not the Light, but [was sent] to bear witness of the Light. The true Light was, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own (inheritance or possessions), and His own (people) received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld

* As an analogy to the difference between the Christ of the earlier Evangelists and of John—the difference between the Socrates of Xenophon and the Socrates of Plato has been pointed out a thousand times.

His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father,) full of grace and truth. John beareth witness of Him and hath cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me has become [has taken His place] before me: for He was before me. For of His fulness all we received, and grace for grace. For the Law was given through Moses; Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time: the Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He declared Him."

§ 1.

The most obvious peculiarity of this Introduction is its extreme child-like simplicity, combined with its riches and depth of thought. It is not, as at first might seem, chronological, sweeping over the period from creation to redemption, or (as has been said) "a history of the several gradually advancing forms of manifestation of the Word." In the outset I reject this view of the structure as untenable: I am satisfied that all attempts to read it as a succession of chronological statements do violence at some point or other to the language. So far as I can make out, we have in it an orderly and profoundly connected series of thoughts, each preparing the mind for that which follows, each making a fresh and farther revelation of Divine truth, and, when all taken together, exhibiting the *gist* of the narrative that follows. The order will be apparent when we have studied the whole.

The first thing that strikes one on examining the paragraph is a certain subtle affinity to the first chapter of Genesis, which is an introduction to the story of the first man, as this is an introduction to the story of the second Man, the Lord from heaven. The great words are the same in both cases, though they have evidently deepened in their later use—the Beginning, God, the Word ("God Said"), All Things, Light, Darkness, Life, to Be, to Become.

While the Evangelist begins with creation, he goes very far beyond, and consequently uses many words that were not needed in the book of Genesis, but are indispensable to his purpose—such as these—Law, Grace, Truth, Faith, Sons of God, and so on.

As in the opening of Genesis, "God" is taken for granted. There is no attempt to prove that He is, by argument either *a priori* or *a posteriori*. There is no parley or discussion with the atheist. There is no notice taken—not even a side-glance—of any denial that has ever been made of the Divine existence. With a grand daring of disregard, all such denials, together with the speculations on which they are based or by which they profess to be justified, are silently passed by, as if there never had been, and never could be, any controversy on such a subject; and the paragraph proceeds on the assumption that He is, as beyond question, like a postulate or axiom.

We are at once placed in thought by the Evangelist in "the Beginning." In every new generation, science is carrying us back into a more remote antiquity, but has done nothing whatever to help us to conceive of a past eternity. The Evangelist does not call us to form any such conception—which indeed the human mind is incapable of doing. But he takes us back till we are behind creation—ere sun or moon or star existed—behind protoplasm or whatever other name may be used; and that timeless Past, "before the world was," "before the foundation of the world," he calls "the Beginning."

"In the Beginning was"—*God?* We are prepared for such a statement; we almost expect it; if it be a truism, it is a glorious one, and underlies all religion. But it is another thing that the Evangelist tells us. "In the Beginning," he says, "was *the Word*." The Word: who or what can this Word be? Is it a new name—the Christian-

philosophic name for God? Or had God a companion in the bygone eternity? Is Dualism taught here? and is this Word a second God? Or have we here a name for God's first-born creature, called into being before all worlds? Or does the term belong to some system of philosophic speculation, relating to the nature and action of God? Such questions would almost certainly, in some shape or other, spring up in the mind of a heathen reader into whose hands this Gospel might fall. The Evangelist will answer them all, if we have patience, and will give us the true knowledge of the Word, even as the Apostle Paul declared the Unknown God to the Athenians.

Without noticing even in outline any of the learned inquiries and discussions as to where the Evangelist found this name, and in what sense he meant it, it is enough to say that it was already in use at the time he wrote, and probably long before. In particular it had been woven into elaborate religious speculations by the Jews living in Alexandria. Just as our modern scientific culture, or the scientific spirit, as it is called, is exerting a wide influence in the domain of religious thought to-day, so did Greek philosophy, particularly that of Plato, among these Jews. Taking the writings of the Old Testament as the Divine source of spiritual knowledge, and rejecting mere verbal literalism of interpretation, they endeavoured to give philosophic expression to the truths they apprehended, and to build them into a philosophic system. Under such conditions the doctrine of the Word (the *Logos*) took shape in the school represented by Philo, and no doubt soon became widely known. There is no ground, however, for supposing that the Evangelist borrowed the name from Philo; it was in far wider and older use, having its origin as far back as the first chapter of Genesis, which I have no doubt was vividly present in his mind as he wrote. "And God *Said*,"

"and God *Made*": so it runs throughout that chapter, preparing for the utterance of the Psalmist, "By the *Word* of the Lord were the heavens *made*, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

A word is a thought, or emotion, or volition, expressed in sound, and abiding where it is lodged after the sound has passed away. You put *yourself* into your word, if it is a true word—your own mind, your own heart, your own will. In telling us that the Word was in the beginning, does the Evangelist then simply mean—that God *spake* and called things into being by the word of His power? and that it was not "holy light" (as Milton sings), but voice or sound, that was the "offspring of heaven first-born"? And is the voice of God here personified, as His "wisdom" is personified in the Book of Proverbs? Shall we say that God's word in the beginning called the heavens and the earth into existence—that it afterwards came forth, generation after generation, to the children of men through the prophets—that in the fulness of time it came forth as a living and holy humanity—that God's final word to men is a Man, even the Man Christ Jesus, who is the truth of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God? We might be inclined to answer, *Yes, it is but a strongly figurative way of telling us this*, were it not that the marks of personality are so numerous and decisive, not merely in separate expressions, but in the whole scope of the paragraph. The English version is right in naming the Word *He* and not *It; He*, the person—not *It*, the voice.

In the beginning the Word "*was with God.*" At first glance the phraseology seems of the simplest kind. To be with one, we say, is to be his companion, or associate, or fellow. The original marks intimacy even more decisively than does the English translation. We are not to regard the Word as sundered or separated from God; there is dis-

tinctness in some sense, but no apartness or away-ness. The phraseology is not singular in the writings of John : we find it in such instances as the following : "That Eternal Life which was *with* the Father;" "We have confidence *toward* God;" "We have an Advocate *with* the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." When it is said, "He was with God," this is antithetic to what is said afterwards, that He was made flesh and "dwelt among us." The manner of the fellowship with God indicated by "*with*" is in no way explained by the Evangelist, and we must be content to leave it undefined. Taken by itself, apart from the doctrine that God is one, we should find no greater difficulty in the statement, "*The Word was with God*," than in the question of the people respecting Jesus, "Are not His brethren with us?"

The Evangelist adds in the same breath, "And the Word *was God*." It is not that He "was a god," or that He "was of God," or that "God was the Word," but beyond contradiction, as the English version gives it : "The Word was God." The Evangelist may be put out of court as a witness; his testimony may be regarded as worthless; but it is not possible to make anything of it but that "the Word was God." Standing by itself, the statement is quite intelligible. That "*was*" makes the Word Divine. Whatever is to be affirmed concerning God is to be affirmed concerning *Him*.

No language could be simpler, clearer, more definite, than the language we have been considering. Each separate statement—as a statement—is intelligible to a child. But when we put the statements together, and try to harmonize them, our intellects are absolutely baffled. He *was with* God ; He *was* God : how can both statements hold? Unless the name "God" be used in a double sense, the second statement seems to negative the first. If one is *with* another, how can he *be* that other? If the Word was *with* God,

how can He *be* God? The difficulty does not lie in the obscurity of the statements made to us, but within the Divine nature itself. We shall not clear it away by supposing an "impartation" of Godhead to Him—as a child inherits the humanity of his parents, or as believers are "made partakers of Divine nature." He did not "*become*"; He "*was.*" And then too, "The same *was in the beginning* with God." Nothing that has taken place within the limits of time can explain the mystery. His Past and God's Past, if such expressions be permissible, are one and the same. He was with God and was God, all in the Beginning.

§ 2.

Next, the creation of all things is ascribed to the Word: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." The first clause might have sufficed; but, to place the meaning beyond question, the second is added, which is not a mere redundancy, a mere repetition or variation of the first clause, after the manner of Hebrew parallelism, but formally negatives and excludes the supposition that in some corner or far-off realm of space there may have been some other Being at work independently. The "all things" (all without exception) must be taken as equivalent to "the heavens and the earth" of Genesis, or, as we say, the universe: it is impossible to regard them as equivalent to "the spiritual creation" or "new moral world" introduced by the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. What the Evangelist as a man knew concerning the extent of the universe does not require to come into consideration, any more than what *we* know, or what David knew when he penned the eighth Psalm; but whatever its extent, *the whole* is here included—both the things themselves and the laws which rule them.

To an English ear the expression "was made" naturally

suggests the idea of work or labour. Not so, however, the term which the Evangelist employs in the original. That term is simply "became:" "all things became (came to be) by Him." It answers to the term which occurs so often in the first chapter of Genesis, "And it was so" (translated in the Septuagint, "It became so"). According to the record in Genesis, the heavens and the earth were not fashioned by a silent volition on the part of God, nor by the action of His hand, but in this manner: "God said"—"and it became so." It was by His Word that the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. The Evangelist's statement is the New Testament repetition of the record in Genesis: in this vast universe which exists before our eyes, there is not anything which does not owe its being to the Word. "In Him," as Paul says to the Colossians, "were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things have been created by Him and for Him; and He is Himself before all things, and in Him all things subsist" (Col. i. 16, 17).

Either the material universe has been called into existence, or it is eternal—as it seemed to certain ancient theorists and to some moderns, who find in matter itself "the primeval cause of all being," "the promise and potency of every form and quality of life," so that GOD is not merely unnecessary, but is excluded. It is the former view which is presented here. But what "course" or "process" followed the calling of matter into existence—what spaces of duration lay between the command and the perfect "*it was so*"—is left in the dark. For aught that the Evangelist tells us, the original creative act may have been followed by processes of evolution extending over unmeasured time—all which processes would be covered by the word "*became*."

"When God made the rocks, He made the fossils in

them," said the old weaver to the boy David Livingstone—but the Evangelist does not speak after this fashion; though his language is non-scientific, yet it does not require to be corrected so as to take it out of conflict with fact, any more than the astronomer forbids us to speak of "sunrise" and "sunset." All the researches of science go to show that God has set an example for all workers to follow, by proceeding from the lower to the higher, working (if one may reverently use such an expression) on one and the same ground-plan throughout, yet producing ever higher and nobler results. Of such processes, however, the Evangelist gives no account or even hint, but simply declares that the universe, in its every realm and minutest detail, owes its being to the Word. It was made "by" Him, or rather "*through*" Him: He is not (so to speak) an independent and isolated actor in the case, any more than He is a mere instrument. The will in which creation stands is the will of God; as it is written in Genesis, "*Let us make.*"

Some men, discarding God as a nightmare or oppressive superstition, and professing to be guided by science, are looking out for some force that shall account for what they find in creation. It is becoming more and more manifest that all things are so related, so kin (*sib*, if one may use an expressive old Scotticism), as to form a kind of unity; that the present has grown out of the past; that one form of force may be translated into another, as motion into heat; but that we can create nothing and annihilate nothing. What is the prime Force of all—the Force of which all other forces are the outcome? Is it intelligent or unintelligent? Is it a "potential atom" or a Spirit? Is it a fate or does it possess a heart and a holy will? Shall we say *it* or *He*? Science cannot tell. Science knows nothing which does not rest ultimately on the evidence of sense, and consequently can never take us out of the region of the material. Its most

ingenious and delicate apparatus is after all but an extension of our senses, and all its discoveries therefore are of a "sensible" order; however far out it may go in its researches, and however far back—over spaces measured by millions of years—it comes up to a boundary-line beyond which is impenetrable mystery.

The Evangelist announces that the primal force (if that term must be used) resides in the Word. The creation of a single atom would have been a revelation of Him; how much more is this great universe! A man is always greater than his work; no architect, for example, ever put his whole self into the noblest building he designed; even so the Word is greater than the universe which He has called into being. Still, so far as it goes, it reveals Him to us. To the eye of childhood this world into which we are born is beautiful and strange and marvellous past expression. Not less so to intelligent and thoughtful manhood. If the romance is gone, as the summer dew from the grass at noon, the real wonder only becomes overwhelming.

We look around us upon the infinite variety of productions which the earth brings forth—their use, their goodness, their beauty; we sweep the eye of imagination over ocean and continent, hill and plain, lake and stream, corn-land and forest, sahara and paradise; we mark the changes produced by day and night and the succession of the seasons; we listen to the music of nature—the boom of ocean dashing on the shore, the wind in the forest, the tinkling of the hidden moorland rill; we think of the countless tribes of living and sentient beings that inhabit earth along with us; we think of man with his marvellous endowments; we think of the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places; we listen to all that science can tell us of the subtle agencies that pervade creation and the laws which bind all beings together.

Then, standing on earth, as on a promontory that juts out into the infinite, we look upwards and outwards. Beyond the nether sky, with its cloud-scenery and its sunrise and sunset hues of beauty, there are illimitable realms of space, studded with worlds moving harmoniously in close-ravelled maze. These heavens were vast and glorious to the eye of the old Chaldee gazer thousands of years ago; how have their vastness and glory grown to us since then! The globe which is our dwelling-place is one of the smallest planets wheeling round one of the lesser suns. It is conceivable that only our own little world might have hung solitary in immensity; but the space swept by the telescope teems with solar systems compared with which ours is insignificant. In the Milky Way alone are millions of suns, the nearest of which requires years to dart its light to us, though light travels two hundred thousand miles during a single vibration of a pendulum. In the presence of that immensity our globe is but as a grain of sand on the seashore.*

And as is our relation to space, so also to time, according to the teachings of geology: since our world became the theatre of life, ages on ages have run their course, for the duration of which we have absolutely no measure.

---

* "The least of the stars seen in the galactic depths—even though the telescope which reveals it be the mightiest yet made by man, so that with all other telescopes that star would be unseen—is a sun like our own. It is a mighty mass, capable of swaying by its attraction the motions of worlds, like our earth and her fellow-planets, circling in their stately courses around it. It is an orb instinct with life (if one may so speak), aglow with fiery energy, pouring out each moment supplies of life and power to the worlds which circle around it. It is a mighty engine, working out the purpose of its Great Creator. . . . . What then must be our thoughts when we see thousands and thousands of stars, all suns like our own, and many probably far surpassing him in splendour, passing in stately progress across the telescopic field of view! The mind sinks appalled before the amazing meaning of the display."—RICHARD A. PROCTOR, B.A., *Cantab.; Hon. Sec. of Royal Astronomical Society.*

How great must *the Maker* be!—how wise, how good, how glorious! That universe in its vastness, wonder, and divine beauty, and in all the evolutions through which it has passed during countless ages, lay first of all in His mind—if one may say so—as the grand cathedral was in the brain of the architect ere its foundation-stone was laid: it took all that we see, and all that science discloses, and all that mystery still hides, to express His creative Idea.

"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." There is indeed in some minds an unbelieving suspicion that harm must come to piety through researches into the constitution of nature and the investigation of its history and laws; and the very name of *science* in some quarters has a profane sound and awakens an uneasy dread that the next word will be *scepticism*. In the face of sayings to the effect that an undevout astronomer is mad, it must be granted that it is possible for a scientific inquirer to know only the material and deny the Divine, even as it is possible for a man who is busy making money in a selfish spirit to have no heartfelt appreciation of the sacrifice of the Redeémer. But there is no feud between religion and the scientific spirit. On the contrary, religion lifts up her hands and blesses science in the name of the Lord, and bids her be reverent, humble, true, and fearless. And when science takes the blessing, she can adopt the words with which Kepler concludes his work, "On the Harmony of Worlds:"—"I thank Thee, O my Creator and Lord, that Thou hast given me this joy in Thy creation—this delight in the works of Thy hands. I have shown the excellency of Thy works unto men, so far as my finite mind was able to comprehend Thine infinity. If I have said aught unworthy of Thee, or aught in which I may have sought my own glory, graciously forgive it."

§ 3.

Carrying our thoughts forward into a new region, the Evangelist adds, "In Him was life."

This evidently means more than that He lived—which in this connection were a mere truism. To have life was His characteristic. Life was that which existed in Him, and of which He was full. In our case life is derived, is dependent, is placed under limitations, is continually changing, must be nourished and sustained by fit supplies: in Him it exists as in its eternal and exhaustless fountain.

The Evangelist's statement at first glance appears simple in the extreme, and we are in danger of slipping over it without much thought; but, if we pause and look, it broadens out and deepens under our gaze all but immeasurably.

Let us, first of all, look into the meaning of the word "life" itself. It is not to be resolved into "happiness" or "salvation," far less into mere existence; all such paraphrases are an emptying of it. It is one of the great words we so often meet in John's writings, which are used without being defined, and which indeed could not be made intelligible by verbal explanations. Including its cognate "*live*," it is found more than fifty times in his Gospel alone, and nearly as often in his Epistles and the Book of Revelation. It is the antithesis to "death," as is seen, for example, in the passage, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Our order usually is *life and death;* we reckon "from the cradle to the grave;" we begin with life, and trace it from its dawn onwards throughout its manifold vicissitudes till it ends with the last breath; in John, on the contrary, the order is *death and life*—answering to which order, for example, is the name which Jesus takes upon Himself: "I am the resurrection and the life;" implying that He begins by dealing with death.

To know the scope of the word, we begin with life in its lowest and simplest forms, as it is seen in the Arctic moss or the ooze brought up from the sea-depths by the *Challenger*. Even in such lower forms the physiologist cannot tell us what life is, nor the microscopist, nor the chemist, nor the wisest philosopher. They can tell us the signs of it, and the laws according to which it is continued or extinguished; but that is about all. From the lowest and simplest we pass upwards, through one order of being after another, till we come to man, in whom life reveals itself so much more marvellously, in sense, intellect, emotion, conscience, will. We mark how different a thing it is in different cases; to the unlettered peasant and the man of profound and various culture; to the playful child and to the grey-haired saint, ready to enter the perfect kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In this passage the term "life" is not to be restricted to any single province, wide or narrow, "physical," "moral," "spiritual," or "eternal," but is to be taken in the whole breadth of its significance.

Besides the marvel and mystery of life in its nature and infinitely various forms, there is also its immensity of volume —its quantity—its amazing amplitude of extent—all that is, all that has been, in air, and earth, and sea. So far as our comprehension is concerned, the sum of it is absolutely boundless. As an illustration of the impossibility of dealing with this aspect of the case, a single fact may be selected from the microscopic researches of Ehrenberg: one cubic inch of the hardened clay called *tripoli* he found to contain between forty and fifty thousand millions of the silicious fossil shells of *infusoria*. In presence of such a fact our minds are utterly helpless to conceive the extent of life even in this little globe that we inhabit.

All the life of creation, so vast in its sum, so wonderful

and glorious, from the life that lasts only a summer evening to that of the archangel who bows before the eternal throne and adores—all that life, the Evangelist tells us, "was in Him." He is the Fount whence it has all proceeded. Being in Him, the outcome was a necessity. If there is life in the vine, it comes out in branch, and leaf, and grape cluster. So with the life that was in the Word: it has come out in the vast and varied life of creation. Because in Him was life, therefore this is a living world, and not a mere material and ponderable ball, or a world of automatons, destitute of understanding and volition. All the life of which we have any knowledge is the out-blossoming and fruiting of the life that was in Him.

This "Life" the Evangelist proceeds to tell us was "the light of men." The order of thought is the same as in Psalm xxxvi. 9: "With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light." Light is another of the great words of this Evangelist. Its antithesis is darkness. John's usage as to both words is shown in such passages as the following: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil;" "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" "I am the light of the world;" "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."

The terms belong primarily to the sphere of nature—the light of day and the darkness of night. But in every instance in which they appear in John's writings, they are used as figures of spiritual ideas; they suggest the element in which the evil life proceeds, and the element in which God is said to dwell. According to John's usage, light is not that which enters the bodily eye, but symbolizes knowledge, wisdom, truth, holiness. Darkness, its antithesis, he likewise uses symbolically; for example, even when he

records the going forth of the betrayer from the upper room, and adds, "*It was night*," we feel that his thought is moving in a symbolic region. Darkness is not the mere absence or negation of light; it is a positive element, antagonistic to light, and is synonymous with ignorance, hatred, falsehood, unrighteousness, sin and misery, implying that man has lost God.

Now the "life" that was in the eternal Word "was the light of men." The statement seems intended to cover the whole period of human history. It is not that the life "*became*" the light of men at some definite time, fixed by chronology—as for example at the incarnation, or the commencement of Christ's public ministry, when the people who sat in darkness saw great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death light sprang up: the life "*was*" the light of men from the beginning.* During that brief period of innocence, when the ideal and the actual were one and the same, it was so; and so also, though in a different mode, down the darkest ages that followed: as matter of fact, the life that was primarily in the Word, and that was divinely implanted in human souls, was the world's light.

We must not represent the case to ourselves in a mere mechanical way, but vitally. We are not to find an analogy in the shining of the sun upon the moon and planets, making them gleam like burnished metal. It was not that the life emitted rays which beat upon men's eyes *from without*—but as when a lantern is lighted: the life entering men's souls kindled them, and shone *within*, and gave light (streaming from within outwardly) to all that were around. When natural life is quenched, what a blank is occasioned!

* How and in what measure will never be known until the great day of unveiling; but in the meantime we must not forget that He has all along had sovran access into the human breast.

how the lustre of the eye is dimmed! how night and darkness settle down upon the countenance! Rising from the natural to the spiritual, it is life that is the light of men —the light in which they see, and in which they shine. To the soul that lies in death, the glories of God are no more than the stars of heaven to the blind. The Word is the light-giver in that He is the life-giver. In perfect keeping with this mode of viewing the case is the saying of Jesus, "If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because *there is no light in him.*" The light is inward, or it is nothing to us, either for our own walking, or for help to others. Milton has embodied the truth in these lines :

> "He that has light within his own clear breast,
> May sit i' th' centre, and enjoy bright day :
> But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
> Benighted walks under the midday sun ;
> Himself is his own dungeon."

"The light shineth in darkness." Note how "darkness" (symbolizing evil) is named, and its existence taken for granted, without being explained or in any way accounted for ; nor even is a single hint thrown out to mitigate the awful oppressiveness of its mystery. Were the question presented to us as an abstract one, we should pronounce darkness impossible in a universe created by a holy and almighty Being. But, as a matter of fact, it exists. Is it eternal? Or had it a beginning? If so, when and how? Is it utterly causeless? Is it the result of necessity? and is the sinner as little to blame for his sin as the apple is for obeying the law of gravitation and falling to the ground? Is it included among the "all things" that were made by the creative Word? Is He its author, and is the will of God its ground? Is evil not really evil, but only good in the bud? Is it the stumbling of the child in learning to walk—his stammering in learning to speak? Is the Fall (as

has been argued) "the most fortunate and greatest event in history," being the starting-point of man's moral freedom? Is it better to have become a sinner than to dwell in the bowers of Paradise? Is sin the necessary pathway to the highest ideal of perfection and felicity? Has God introduced evil in order that He may work out the highest purpose, and is He (so to speak) playing both sides of the game, the right hand against the left? Or does it spring from imperfection in Him? If it be a contradiction of His will, how could it originate, except He is less than almighty?

The problem to which these and other questions belong —the origin of evil—is one that has fascinated, perplexed, bewildered, tortured, all who have ever attempted to deal with it; they could neither let it alone, nor mitigate by a single shade the blackness of its darkness: the attempt to solve it has proved as vain as the search for the philosopher's stone or the elixir vitæ; every solution yet proposed contains within it the very mystery which it attempts to clear up. The Evangelist has the opportunity of giving some relief to the mind by throwing light upon the mystery; indeed it appears as if the line of thought he is pursuing must necessitate some utterance on the subject, it seems to lie so directly in his way. Yet he says not a single word. There is the "darkness"—unaccounted for, unexplained, a dread and undeniable fact of almost infinite magnitude. Is not his silence significant?

"The light shineth" in this darkness. This statement does not refer merely to the personal ministry of Jesus and the promulgation of His gospel: we are not to think merely of the rising up of a great Teacher who came to instruct an ignorant and benighted world; the statement sweeps over all time, and embraces all the illuminating activities of the Word, both before and since the Incarnation. It is not

merely that the light shone for a period of three or three-and-thirty years; but from the beginning of human history it has gone on shining, and shineth still. This world has never been given over to the unchallenged reign of darkness: there have always been souls wherein the life has been kindled, and through whom it has shot its rays into the world's gloom—God's candles lighted and placed according to His own will. In this respect the Father of lights has never been left without witness.

Have light and darkness then entered into coalition? Do they form a mixture, neither clear nor dark, like our twilight? Is there a blending of the two (in our modern civilization, for example) as when two chemical elements combine to form a new substance? Does the darkness, when penetrated or permeated by the light, take in something of its nature, and become in a measure assimilated to it? No; the darkness still retains its own qualities; continues to be darkness; is essentially the same to the last; does not appropriate the light, but holds it outside, as something which it cannot understand. As it was when the Holy One dwelt among men, so it has ever been; the light of a heavenly and beautiful life has shone before men's eyes, and they have not so much as seen it. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; so far from comprehending, not seldom has the darkness formally *denied* it, as when the Pharisees rejected the Christ of God, and then asked, "Are we blind also?"

§ 4.

The following verses (6—13) conduct us to a fresh point of view from which to regard the Word.

There arose a God-sent man, the Evangelist tells us, whose name was John. This was John the Baptist, the son

of Zacharias and Elisabeth. We have glimpses of his story in the Gospels, in so far as it bears on the life of Jesus, glimpses which exhibit him as a true-souled and noble man, than whom there had not risen a greater among them that are born of women. There are those who arrive at just conclusions through research, intuition, or reasoning, and become leaders of their generation into farther light; there are others, like Cyrus, whom God raises up and girds for great service, though they know Him not: this man, the Evangelist announces, was "sent from God"—a messenger after the example of Moses or Elijah, fulfilling the prophecy: "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me."

Though sent from God, he did no miracle: gave no fresh or farther revelation of Divine truth. His special function—the scope of his ministry, grasped in its total significance—was witness-bearing.

In particular, he came to bear witness concerning the light—the light that had been shining uncomprehended in the darkness, and that was now entering on a new and more wonderful manifestation. Does the light then need that witness should be borne to it? Is not light its own evidence? Yes, if men have eyes to see; but because they lay in the darkness and slumber of sin, it was necessary to arouse them, and to give testimony to the true light, distinguishing it from all false lights that could only lure to death. In an obvious sense, "the law and the prophets" formed a great system of "witness" to the coming One (Acts x. 43; Rom. iii. 21, 22); but it required completing, and John's ministry was the completion of it—the grand close of the prophetic symphony. The morning star, day's harbinger, bears witness of the sun, by shining in his light; and so also does the mountain-top, kindled with the first rays of morning, to the dwellers in the deep valley beneath, or the

far-stretching plain. But John's testimony went beyond even this: he not merely preceded the Messiah, closing the prophetic line, but, having first aroused the nation by that cry, "*Repent*," he actually introduced and named Him to Israel. A single example will suffice to show the character and manner of his testimony. "John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him; and I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost; and I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John i. 32—34).

We sometimes speak as if we thought Divine dealing with men intended simply to render them "without excuse." It is true that God's revelations have left even the heathen without excuse in their ungodliness, as Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Romans (i. 20), and this not merely by way of result, but of Divine purpose. The leaving of men without excuse is not however the complete account of God's action; He wishes more than merely to keep Himself in the right in the condemnation of sinners. In the case of the Baptist's ministry this holds good; his testimony was not given in order that men might be without excuse, but (answering to the Divine benevolence) "that all men through him might believe." The very aim of his mission, the reason why God sent him, was that men might be led into faith—the faith spoken of in such words as these: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" "These (things) are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life in His name."

Zacharias spoke in his prophetic song of "the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high

hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death;" and when afterwards the Baptist began his ministry, "all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Messiah or not." Doubtless many of his disciples could say, "He kindled my soul; my intercourse with him was like the dawn of day." But he was not himself the light: only at most "a burning and shining lamp;" that was all; and his shining was a testimony to the light that is unkindled and eternal.

The true light (true in distinction, not only from the false, but also from the partial and borrowed and dependent) was that "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* The light given by the eternal Word was not a mere private illumination vouchsafed to a few; but wheresoever there was a living man, born into the world, light was given to him. This harmonizes with what Paul says (Rom. i. 19): "That which may be known of God is manifest in them"—in their very consciousness, in their very hearts (ii. 15)—"for God *hath showed it unto them*," hath made it lie in their view as in the daylight. The very life given to man, as a being endowed with understanding, conscience, and other equally great faculties, and placed in such a world, carries in it the possession, though of course not necessarily the appropriation, of light; for there was such a thing as "holding the truth in unrighteousness." It is not needful to single out men like Socrates, and claim that light was given to *them;* but take any common man out of the crowd, even to him was light given, and that

* It makes no substantial difference *in the sense* whether we translate, as the English version does, "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," or, "the true light was coming into the world which lighteth every man." The latter translation would bring the clause into this group of passages—John iii. 19; iv. 14; ix. 39; xi. 27; xii. 46. A good deal can be said on both sides.

light was due to the Word. This holds not merely since the Incarnation, but from the beginning; and we must read history with the fact in our minds. The measure of light is very different in different cases; but in all cases light *has* been given; and men have been responsible to God in that proportion.

Advancing another stage, the Evangelist tells us, "He was in the world," that world in which we are at present, which we enter by the gate of birth, and leave by death. The manner of His presence is in no way explained—whether by virtue of His omnipresence, or by theophany, or by incarnation—only the fact is asserted. "And the world was made by Him"—it was His creation; it owed existence, order, happiness, and well-being to Him; and yet it "knew Him not." He remained a stranger in His own world, unknown among the works of His own hand.

This was sad: but there was sadder than this. "He came unto His own," unto His own possessions, His own heritage, "and His own (covenant people) received Him not." The manner in which He came, the abasement and self-sacrifice involved in His coming, the purposes He had in view, the claims He raised, the grace He proffered—these matters are not yet touched upon; only the fact is declared of a real and close approach to Israel. But His coming was not met by a welcome; Israel did not stretch out the hand to Him. It was as if a monarch should enter one of his own palaces, and none of his servants should recognize him. Nor was there merely non-recognition; there was rejection; He was repelled as an intruder: the phrase, "*They received Him not*," marks a refusal to have Him. "Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." "To Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." The supreme token of rejection was the

cross, when they "denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired that a murderer should be granted unto them, and killed the Prince of life."

The rejection was not indeed absolutely universal; some *did* receive Him. The "receiving" carries in it that they admitted His claims, accepted the grace He held out, trusted in Him as Saviour, with the assent of the understanding, and the consent of the heart. In itself, the term is somewhat general. When the Galileans "received" Him after His departure from Judea (John iv. 45), it marks a certain welcome given to Him. When He says to His disciples, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me," He does not speak of mere kindly feeling, expressed in hospitable entertainment, though even this is not to be undervalued, but He speaks of a believing welcome given to the messengers on account of the message they bring, and of Him whom they represent. So here, the receiving implies that His claims were allowed, and welcome given to Him accordingly.

The receivers are further described in the clause, "even to them who believe in His name." These words are to be read in the light of the great gospel message, as afterwards set forth in the preaching and writings of the Apostles. His name is the summing up of all that He is as Saviour and Lord, and faith or believing is the trust of "all that is within us" reposed in Himself.

Though comparatively few in number, there *were* such receivers of Him when He came to His own; and to all of them He gave power to become "sons of God"—not "*disclosed a relationship already existing*," but (vital distinction) gave power *to become* what they were not before. The paternal and filial relationship helps us to understand the nature of this sonship. What a son is to an earthly father, that a receiver of Christ is to the eternal God. It is a great

thing to be God's creature, as Adam was in his innocence, the creature of a God supremely wise, and good, and holy, and mighty; and it is conceivable that believers might only have obtained forgiveness, and been received back into a state of favour as creatures; but the grace actually shown goes unspeakably beyond this—they become "sons."

And it is not sonship in the loose sense in which all men are sons—"for we are also His offspring"—but, transcending this, after the example of *the* Son, and in virtue of union with Him. It is of this sonship that the Apostle Paul says, "The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit"—not that we are believers—but that we (being believers) "are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ;" and again, "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus;" and again, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father."

Man could never have claimed such a position as this, taking his stand on any prerogative of caste or character; no man had native right to it or native ability to attain it; but to them who received Him, even to them that believe in His name, He "gave power" to become sons—power whether we regard the legal aspects of the case or the moral and spiritual, the *status* or the disposition, and including the whole capability of obtaining and holding possession.

The sonship is not effected in virtue of a mere act of adoption on the part of God. A child may be taken out of the family to which he originally belonged and be planted in another; he may get a new name; he may be trained to forget that he had other birth; he may be made heir to great estates; he may be as dearly loved and as tenderly cared for as if he were own child to those who have adopted him: but the fact remains that he is really the child of

another, and nature may prove too strong for the new bonds, and he may pine for his native home, and at length go back to it. The "sons of God," however, are *sons by birth*, for such is the significance of the word here used, having not only a new name and position, but also a new life. It is not simply that they are *called* sons; they *are* sons, partakers of the Divine nature, with a filial relationship, and a filial resemblance to the eternal God. The sonship is already established in fact and in principle, though it awaits its full manifestation hereafter (1 John iii. 1, 2).

Unfolding the idea conveyed in the very term "*son*," it is added, "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Born into God's family: full illustration of this is found in the conversation with Nicodemus, recorded in the third chapter of this Gospel. To what is the new birth to be traced? Out of what does it spring? It is not "of blood," blood-relationship, natural descent, transmission from father to son, even though the pedigree could be traced back clear to Abraham. "Nor of the will of the flesh," excluding all that pertains to the sensuous nature. "Nor of the will of man," excluding all that pertains even to the higher manhood. The origin (*vis originis*) of the new birth is outside human will, outside humanity altogether, and lies in God. It is due to the good pleasure of His goodness, to His abundant mercy, to His great love wherewith He loved us. When we recognize the truth that regeneration is no mere hard and arbitrary condition, on which entrance into heaven is made dependent, but is the provision of Divine love, making us meet as sons for the eternal fellowship and eternal enjoyment of God, the whole aspect of the doctrine is changed, and it becomes to us a new revelation of grace, and an inspiration of the loftiest hope.

§ 5.

"He was in the world"; "He came unto His own." Evident stress has been laid on these expressions. What do they mean? What was the manner of His coming and His presence? What was the nature of that manifestation which "the world" did not recognize, but which was attended with such blessed results to as many as received Him? The Evangelist answers our questions by telling us, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

Hitherto the verb "*was*" has been made use of in speaking about the Word; now for the first time we meet the verb "*became*"—"The Word was made, or became, flesh." This statement brings into view one of the deepest mysteries with which the human mind can deal—the mystery which we sum up as "*the Incarnation.*" We get no help from analogy towards understanding it; the case is altogether unique and without parallel. While, however, we cannot clear the mystery, there are some things which we may set down as certain.

It is certain (to begin) that, in becoming "flesh," the eternal Word did not cease to be what He was before—as "the water that was made wine" ceased to be water. He continued still to be the Word, the same who was in the beginning with God and who was God; by whom all things were made, and who throughout history was the life and light of men. The mode of His being was changed, but in personal essence He remained the same. This is so obvious that it is unnecessary to enter into any discussion of it.

Next, it is certain, according to the Evangelist's statement, that, in being made flesh, the Word "became" what He was not before. Paul's use of the term "*flesh*" is too

well known to require notice here. John's use of the term is different; he employs it to denote human nature in its entireness, with all its sensibilities, capacities, and powers—not the body alone, but all that constitutes us human beings. To say that the Word was made flesh is the same thing as to say that He became a true member of the human family. He had a *body*—material, visible, tangible; so that men heard Him, saw Him with their eyes, looked upon Him, and their hands handled Him (1 John i. 1). But He did not take a body only, and become the Word embodied, His higher nature occupying the place of a human soul in a material frame: a body without a soul is not a man. He could say, "Now is *my soul* troubled;" or again, the Evangelist could write concerning Him, "He groaned *in the spirit* and was troubled." He became as really and as fully man as any member of the race. The *sinlessness* of His manhood is not asserted here—it comes unmistakably into view elsewhere—but the special thought to grasp is the *reality* and *wholeness* of that manhood. Hence He grew in knowledge and wisdom, He was tempted, He sorrowed, He wept, He rejoiced, He wondered, He prayed, as truly as we do—in all things made like unto His brethren.

We have no parallel to the case; neither have we even an analogy that can help us to a better understanding of it. A prince in disguise, going about among his subjects and blessing them, is no illustration. There was no disguise. It is true that men knew Him not when He came; but the cause of their non-recognition lay in themselves—in their own moral and spiritual condition—and not that He wore a mask. I set aside, therefore, as unwarranted, every view of the Incarnation which regards it as a disguise. Indeed, to represent it so is not merely unwarranted, but suggests what is untrue. In point of fact, the Incarnation is not a Divine hiding, but a Divine disclosure. The Divine could not be

revealed perfectly, so far as our needs are concerned, in the geometry, the mechanism, the chemistry, the life, the order and glorious beauty of the world—nor in providence and history—nor in the symbols of the law of Moses—nor in spoken or written words: the highest revelation can be made—*to us*—only through the medium of our own nature. The "Word made flesh" is a revelation—the highest revelation that at present we are capable of receiving—of the Divine; the glory of God shines forth to us from the face of Jesus Christ.

How shall we conceive of the union of the two natures in Him? Is humanity Deified? Is Deity humanized? Is there a blending of the human and the Divine? Do the two natures run one into the other? or are they simply present together in Jesus, harmoniously co-operating—sometimes the one coming into view and sometimes the other? Such things are nowhere said or implied by the Evangelist. What we do learn is that, at a definite time in history, the eternal Word, continuing to be the Word and to possess all the attributes of the Word, assumed our true and full humanity; Godhead in its perfect essence, and manhood in all its elements, were joined in indivisible and everlasting union. The thought is wonderful and glorious beyond all conception; we can only contemplate without comprehending.

Why the Word was made flesh is not here declared; nothing is said about the holy love of which the Incarnation is an expression, nor about the purpose in view, namely, to accomplish the work of redemption and restore sinful men to God; the one thing stated is the amazing fact itself.

Having assumed our nature, He "dwelt," tabernacled, sojourned among us—"*us*" His friends and companions. Just as we are strangers and sojourners on earth, so He

became a sojourner likewise. He tabernacled, He took up His abode a pilgrim among pilgrims, as in a manner He tabernacled in the midst of His people Israel in the wilderness. It is conceivable that He might have come into the world to dwell with men throughout successive generations—as the people said, "We have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth for ever"—or He might have assumed our humanity and simply made His appearance in it, departing almost as soon as He had come. But for a period of about three-and-thirty years He remained as a sojourner on earth, a man among men, God with us. Here is an answer to Solomon's wondering exclamation: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth?" Here is fulfilment, higher than had yet been known, of the ancient word, "I will set my tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor you," and anticipation of what shall yet be when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them—their God."

The line that follows is usually regarded as a parenthesis, out of the fulness of the Apostle's heart, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father." If parenthesis it be, it is in its right place, and is no interruption of the narrative, but rather carries it forward. It is John's testimony, agreeing with that of his fellow-apostles, to the majesty that was shown forth in Jesus. We, His fellow-pilgrims, beheld His majesty. The vision of that majesty began to dawn upon them in the beginning of their intercourse with Him, though, for a time, it was dim and obscure, owing to their dulness of spiritual perception; but as they entered more fully into fellowship with Him, it became more clear and glorious. The majesty was not that of a mere man, standing however high above his fellow-men; it was not official, but personal—"as of the

Only-begotten of the Father;" * it was Divine and not merely human, though manifested humanly; it was what might have been expected in One who stands for ever in a relation to the Father which none shares with Him—that of the Only-Begotten. We are not to limit their vision of this majesty to specific occasions, such as the Transfiguration, or the great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead; it was in process throughout the whole period of their intercourse with Him, and was completed when the veil was rent and they could say before Him, "My Lord, and my God!" His glory rose upon them like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day—the glory of wisdom, power, pity, mercy, patience, righteousness, truth, stainless purity, and holy love, untainted by any element of selfishness. All this, says the Evangelist, "we beheld" in the Word made flesh, unobscured by outward abasement and circumstances of lowliness.

Grammatically, the next clause, "*full of grace and truth*," is linked on to the words, "He dwelt among us," and tells what throughout their whole intercourse with Him the Apostles found Him to be; in thought however, as I cannot help believing, it finds its right place just where John has written it.

They found in Jesus a strange and unexampled "fulness" —such a fulness as would require a worldful of books to set forth. It was fulness in presence of the world's immeasurable need. It was fulness that stood in contrast with the emptiness of men. The scribe and the Pharisee, the philosopher and the guide into the paths of pleasure, the bringer forth of things new and the bringer forth of things old, whatever

* The word of comparison, "*as*," has now and again caused needless perplexity. The expression is qualitative. The glory was "as of an only-begotten [who has come forth] from a father." Through the human we are helped to see the super-human.

their pretensions, alike failed to satisfy the cravings of human hearts, so manifold and deep, and left them sighing, "Who will show us any good?" Even the sacred ordinances of the Old Covenant, out of which it was designed that with joy men should draw water as from the wells of salvation, had been turned very largely into mere outward ceremonies, and the sacred services into mere "bodily exercise" — reminding one of the process of dropping buckets into empty wells and drawing nothing up. The Word is made flesh, and sojourns among men; and they find in Him the very fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Two things are named as belonging to His fulness: He was full of "*grace*" and full of "*truth*."

"Grace" is loving favour; it embraces all that was in His heart, and all that He did throughout His sojourn on earth, for the restoring of sinful men to God and making them children in His family. It was not merely that He spoke such gracious words and did such gracious works, that even the publicans and sinners, the outcasts of the nation, drew near and gathered around Him: we must take into account His whole redeeming and saving ministry onwards to His return to the Father.

Conjoined with grace, in His fulness there was also "truth." It is not enough to say that there was no falsehood in Him; in the largest scope of the word, there was TRUTH. In man's graciousness there is oftentimes hollowness and pretence; and even when it is sincere enough it cannot be depended on: if you lean your weight upon it in the day of your weakness, it proves as the staff of a broken reed that goes into your hand and pierces it. Jesus is true in word and deed and character, and can be depended upon to the uttermost. Under the Old Testament the sacrifices and other ordinances were only symbolical; the law had only a *shadow* of good things to

come: in Jesus we have the reality—the very truth that God designed.

Here therefore is the Evangelist's testimony to the perfect completeness of Jesus as Saviour. Those who knew Him on earth proved Him to be full of grace and truth; and what He was, that He is—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

§ 6.

The verse that follows (15) is frequently taken as a parenthesis; one commentator even goes the length of saying that it "should be inserted between the 18th and 19th verses, which appears to be its proper place: thus John's testimony is properly connected." Such a view however seems to break the chain of thought.

The coming forth of the incarnate Word among men was not in secrecy and silence, as a king might go forth *incognito* among his subjects; but public attention was directed to Him. This was done through the ministry of John the Baptist. The place held by this man in the historical unfolding of Divine grace is altogether unique, differing from that both of apostle and prophet. The Evangelist has already introduced him (verses 6—8), as a man sent from God, whose mission it was to bear witness to the True Light, and thereby lead men into faith; and now a summary of his testimony is placed before us.

This testimony occupies a place of its own, as well defined and in some respects as important as that borne by the twelve Apostles, and is worthy of being singled out and presented by itself, as is done here. In speaking of the testimony of the Apostles, we use the present tense, as if they were still engaged in delivering it; we say, "The Apostles *tell us* such and such things;" we take their word, not as designed for the moment of speaking merely, but for

all time; it is still sounding forth. In like manner, the testimony of the Baptist is to be regarded as abiding testimony, of continuous significance; and hence it is said (verse 15), "John beareth witness and crieth, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for He was before me." He "*beareth witness*" and "*crieth*" to the nineteenth century, as to the men of his own day.

In entering on his ministry, the Baptist could only say, "There cometh One mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose:" he could not in the outset name or point out the mightier One. But when Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized of him, the promised sign was given, namely, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him in visible manifestation; and now the abiding testimony of John is this: This Jesus is He of whom I spake when I announced the coming of One after me who is preferred before me, because He was before me. He does not simply identify Him, and step aside that He may have the foremost place; but announces that the coming One, while following him in time, nevertheless preceded him; "for He *was* before me,"—as has been already set forth in the profound teaching of the Evangelist. It is testimony in the line of Christ's own word, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 58).

The witness of the Baptist was not merely corroborated, but was carried forward by the personal experience of the disciples of Jesus, whose testimony is next presented by the Evangelist: "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." The fulness has been already so far described. We have a picture of it in the four Gospels. It is not to be conceived of after a mechanical fashion, as a granary may be full of wheat, or a treasury full of gold. So far as I know, the fulness of Jesus Christ is never set forth

in Scripture in this poor, mechanical way: He is nowhere represented as an "inexhaustible store-house": His fulness is that of a Person. That which is in my friend, of knowledge, of truth, of wisdom, of tenderness, of noble feeling, or whatever else may be named, is in him not mechanically, but vitally: and so with the fulness of Jesus. In Him, personally, was the fulness of grace and truth.

Hence it came that the disciples did all receive of His fulness, each according as he could take it in. *What* He gave is not named in express terms; the words, "grace for grace," point rather to His way of giving, than to the particular blessings given. When He gave it was not as when one gives of his possessions; it was not as when a gracious man does gracious deeds, or a true man deals in truth; it was not merely as when a teacher imparts his knowledge, or a craftsman his skill: but the mind of Christ became theirs also; they could say, each in his measure, "Christ liveth in me." Joyfully the Apostle testifies, in the name of his fellow-disciples, "We all received, and grace for grace." * The *"all"* marks that none went empty away. And it was grace in the stead of grace, or in exchange for grace,—as may be understood from Rom. v. 3—5. When grace had been given, farther and fuller grace succeeded, in endless stream. It was no monotonous giving on His part; but grace, ever fresh and new, took the place of that already imparted.

The experience of the personal attendants and disciples of Jesus was not an experience that stood by itself, peculiar to those who had personal acquaintance and intimacy with Him, but was the beginning of what is going on still: "For

* Literally, *grace instead of* or *in exchange for grace.* Not grace in room of that which Adam lost. Not New Testament, instead of Old Testament grace. Not grace answering to the grace in Christ. But other and fresh grace, in room of grace already given—in unbroken succession.

the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The great name in Israel was the name of Moses; the great distinction of Israel was the Law. But, whatever its promise, the law carried no grace in it; nor was it the truth, but only a shadow of the truth. Grace and truth "became" by Jesus Christ; in and through Him they are realized; He has brought them in, so that we live under the dispensation of grace and truth. There was first, in the law, God's claim of right, which man could not meet, and now, in Jesus Christ, God's gift of salvation.

This great name for the Word made flesh, the Divine manifested humanly—the name, "JESUS CHRIST"—is now written by the Evangelist for the first time. It is the name that embraces all the revelations of the past, and all the grace and truth of the future.

The thought rises to its climax in the words that follow: "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

No man hath seen God at any time—not even Moses when the Lord passed by and proclaimed His name to him. This is no denial that there had been revelations of God in the past. There *had been* such revelations, manifold and precious. There was the revelation of nature, which showed the eternal power and Godhead of the great Creator. There was the revelation of providence and history. There was the revelation made within the human breast, to heart and conscience. There was the revelation made through prophets and seers to whom God spake, and who were "moved" by His Spirit. But putting all such revelations together, it held true, "No man hath seen God at any time." It was not merely that no man saw Him with the seeing of the bodily eye; but take "seeing" in its most spiritual sense, and the statement holds. "Clouds and

darkness were round about Him." "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

But God is now the revealed God. The revealing is accomplished through "the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father." This is another way of describing Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, appropriate to the special purpose which is in the Evangelist's mind. He is the Son of God, His begotten Son, His Only-begotten—standing in a relation to which no parallel exists. He is "in the bosom of the Father"—or literally "towards" His bosom—the expression not a metaphysical one, but marking the most intimate communion, knowledge, love. We are not to explain the expression from such a fact as the leaning of John on Jesus' breast at the last supper, though that may be of some help; we are rather to think of the intimacy and love subsisting between a father and his son. The relationship indicated under the terms "*who is in the bosom of the Father*" is eternal and unchangeable, and His sojourn on earth was no interruption of it.

The Only-begotten Son has "declared" God.* The word indicates "exposition." We know just as much as Jesus Christ has shown us respecting God, and no more. It is not that He has "brought" us a fuller revelation of God than the prophets had done before Him: we are not to think of "the revelation which He came to communicate:" He Himself *is* the Revelation. View Him as the Messenger of God, the Servant of God, the Gift of God, the Lamb of God, the Son of God—the eternal, unsearchable, infinite Father is shown forth in Him. And now, whosoever would know that Being who is the first cause and the last end of

* Compare the words of Jesus, reported in Matt. xi. 27, "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him;" and the words of the Apostle Peter, referring to Jesus, (1 Peter i. 21), "who *by Him* do believe in God."

all things, who fills immensity and eternity with His sovereign presence, who dwells "in light that no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see," let him look to Jesus Christ—for "*He hath declared Him.*" As He Himself said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Not merely His teaching but His whole appearance among men was an unceasing Divine revelation.

The Gospel of John is the forth-setting, by means of selected examples, of what he has expressed in a condensed form in this Introduction. In his narrative it is not that he has had the art to conceal his art: there is really no art to conceal: the current of the narrative is determined by the historical manifestations of which he was a witness, and not by any *a priori* metaphysical "idea." If we divide the narrative into sections at all, the following division seems as natural as any:

First, chapters i. 19—v. 47, concluding with a summary of the "witness" borne to Jesus as the Messiah;

Second, chapters vi.—xii. 50, concluding with a statement of the reception He met with from Israel, and a summary or *résumé* of what He "cried and said" during His public ministry;

Third, chapters xiii.—xvii., giving an account of His private intercourse with "His own" previously to His last sufferings, from the washing of the disciples' feet to the High-priestly prayer;

Fourth, chapters xviii., xix., tracing the story from the crossing of "the brook Cedron" until Joseph and Nicodemus laid Him in the garden-sepulchre;

Fifth, chapters xx., xxi., giving examples of the appearances of the risen Christ to His disciples.

And the whole is written with this design, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in His name."

VII.

The Father and His Little Children.

JOHN'S EPISTLES. CONDITION OF THOSE TO WHOM THE FIRST EPISTLE WAS SENT. "KNOWLEDGE." OPINIONS AS TO THE PERSON OF THE REDEEMER. THE EPISTLE ITSELF. THE "ELECT LADY" AND THE SECOND EPISTLE. GAIUS AND THE THIRD EPISTLE.

THREE Epistles are attributed to the Apostle John; the first a general Epistle, the other two addressed to private friends. These two private letters were not received as apostolic in the early church without opposition. Some denied their apostolic origin; others doubted it; but on the whole, the preponderating judgment was that they were the production of John; and accordingly they took their place among the sacred writings of the New Covenant. All three letters belong to the period of his old age. They present a most wonderful combination of simplicity and moral intenseness, and are marvellously fitted to enkindle and sustain the longing after holiness.

The First Epistle (for essentially it *is* an epistle, though it has neither introductory greeting nor benediction at the close) as it comes into our hands, is loosened from all personal and local associations. The Apostle does not name himself. He does not specify to whom or on what occasion he writes. Were I to form a conjecture where not only

the document itself but even tradition is silent, it would be —either that it was sent forth about the same time with his Gospel, as a companion writing (as possibly the Second Epistle of Peter may have accompanied the Gospel of Mark), or that it was a circular letter designed for the churches among whom he had spent many years, and to whom he had delivered his apostolic testimony, and that it was written when age and weakness had rendered him unable to visit them personally.

Either way it presupposes that he had already borne his full testimony to the great Christian facts. It mediates between the Gospel and the Book of Revelation, having something in common with each. It exhibits what in a good sense may be called the philosophy of the Gospel. Its scope is shown forth in the opening words, which tell us how the Apostles saw the Life Eternal—how they tasted it, and handled it, and understood what it meant,—and how they declared it to others, that they also might have communion in it,—not merely knowing about it, but living therein.

Though we are unable to tell the original destination of the Epistle, we can form a tolerably clear idea of the condition of those to whom it was sent. They were believers in the Son of God. Some of them were children; some were young men; some were fathers. They were surrounded by a heathen population that still clung to the old immoralities and idolatries. They stood in close personal relations to the Apostle. Many of them probably "owed their own selves" to him. A rich and deep spiritual life existed among them. At the same time certain evils were beginning to appear, and the seeds of other evils were being sown. False prophets and false apostles were rising up here and there. An "arrogant licentiousness" was beginning to show itself in some quarters. There was

danger of the weakening of brotherly love among them, and of its degenerating into a mere selfish sentimentalism, cherished because it was a luxury. Some were becoming dissatisfied with the Gospel itself, and were going forth again to form new fellowships, hostile to Jesus Christ. At the same time the churches had to maintain a constant and uncompromising conflict with "the world," whose threatenings, allurements, seductions, and wiles never ceased.

Some things require special notice. Already the word "knowledge" was beginning to assert itself against the word "faith." Some men within the bosom of the Church, falling out of sympathy with their brethren, and others outside of it who had been in some measure attracted to Christ and Christianity (for the most part cultured and wealthy, if we may judge from a later time), were becoming dissatisfied with teaching which they deemed common-place, and craved something more gratifying to the speculative intellect. It was out of this craving that Gnosticism in the Church grew, which was a fresh attempt to solve questions respecting the Divine nature, the creation of the universe, the origin of evil, and so on, that had baffled the keenest intellects of former ages, and to become as gods in knowledge.

We may understand the craving from what we observe in the present day, in which under modern conditions we still meet the ancient demand for a "scientific" religion. Possibly, in those far-away days, the cry for "knowledge" was in part a protest against the indolent credulity and contented ignorance of many professing believers, whose faith was becoming torpid. In part it was the expression of a desire which the Gospel itself created. But in part also it indicated a wrong spiritual condition, a vain curiosity sundered from moral earnestness, a preference for speculation over holiness, a half-belief in salvation by knowledge rather than by faith. The men who prided themselves upon

being "men of knowledge," looked down on simple believers as weak, very much as the Rationalist does to-day, and had but the slightest perception of the transcendent beauty of holiness, if indeed they were not altogether blind to it.

In meeting this tendency, which in process of time made the word "knowledge" the symbol of a subtle antichristianism, John casts no slight upon the word, but, on the contrary, treats it as a very noble one, and uses it with honour. Thus he writes: "Hereby we do *know* that we *know* Him;" "Hereby we *know* that we are in Him;" "We have *known* and believed" God's love; and, not to multiply examples, "We *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may *know* Him that is true." Just as in his Gospel he rescues the word *Logos* from antichristian uses, so in this Epistle he rescues the word "*Know*," and aims at making his "little children" Gnostics in the Divine sense. Knowledge is excellent, but the path to it is not through intellectual speculation, however keen and subtle, but through faith in Jesus Christ and subjection to Him, according to those most Johannine words in the Gospel of Matthew, "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."

Side by side with the craving after "knowledge," a tendency in opposition to moral law was also beginning to show itself. We have nothing to do with "obeying," they said; if you talk of that, you bring us again under the yoke of bondage; what have we to do with "Law"? Under the Gospel we are set free from all restraints. They did not know what this meaneth, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" nor did they desire to say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart."

The tendency which showed itself thus is not peculiar to any age or country, but belongs to human nature. At the same time it specially besets those who overvalue knowledge, when the head works without aid from the heart and the moral nature; they unconsciously make their knowledge a substitute for love, obedience, and holiness—or at least they give knowledge the precedence. Here lay one of the dangers of John's time, and he warns his "children" against it. That is not true knowledge, he says, which can let one go on sinning. Knowing and sinning are in direct antagonism. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Truth cannot be held by the intellect unless it is also loved by the heart and submitted to by the will—the proof being that it is practised in the life. No foothold is left by the Apostle for antinomianism, or turning the grace of God into licentiousness. It is not merely put in this way, We *ought* to be holy; but, with the firmest decisiveness, *He that doeth righteousness is the righteous man; he that committeth sin is of the devil.* It is not knowledge singly and alone that is to be regarded, then; but knowledge issuing in holy obedience to the Divine will.

The subject which was coming to engross speculative thought in the Christian Church, and which did so for generations, was the Person of the Redeemer: as, in our own day, the battle between faith and unbelief, retreating from other points, is being waged again round this central Figure. This witness is true—that there is no spiritual controversy which, "in its deepest roots and latest issues, may not be traced back to a fundamental difference of opinion as to the person of Jesus." Looking upon Him as represented in the Evangelic narrative, men found themselves in the presence of mystery. It did not seem that they could satisfactorily class Him with themselves; and yet there were difficulties

in the way of making Him purely Divine: who and what could He be?

As early as John's time, the heretic Cerinthus led an advance band who solved the mystery in this way: they accepted the pagan doctrine of *Æons* or Emanations from the One Eternal Being, the ground of all existence. Being familiar with heathen ideas, they had no difficulty in conceiving of various persons sharing less or more a common Divine nature; they held that Jesus of Nazareth was the son of Joseph and Mary; that the Æon Christ was united to Him at His baptism, and it was this Æon in Jesus of Nazareth that wrought miracles and taught the true knowledge of God; that this Æon left Him again before His crucifixion; and that it was only the Man—"Jesus"—who was crucified—not "*Jesus Christ.*"

Naturally enough, speculation did not stop here, but advanced to regions beyond. Following out views that still survive in the Brahminism and Buddhism of the East—and that linger even in some Christian minds—matter seemed to be inherently and essentially evil.* The body, being material, was held to be in itself defiled, and the cause of defilement to its royal prisoner, the soul. To hold the material in check, or to overpower it, seemed the necessity of virtue; as, for a virtuous soul to get rid of the material by death was the grand felicity. It was not perhaps to be wondered at that such views should have a charm in a fleshly and brutal age, when noble spirits longed for deliverance from sensual bonds, or sighed for a lodge in some vast wilderness, and when weaker souls were many of them inspired with a disgust of life. Coming to their inquiries

* A tract lies before me in which "original sin" is explained in this way: God creates the soul pure, and it becomes defiled through its union to "corrupt matter," or this "vile flesh" (in the sense of *body*).

however with such ideas, it is easy to understand how they should have erred. We must not indeed attribute to John's age the developed error; only the germ. But men's minds were becoming confused and perplexed, and ages of confusion and perplexity lay in advance.

This world and its things could not have been created (they thought) by the true God. It must have been the work of an inferior Being, to whom the supreme God had delegated creative power. Jesus Christ was not what plain people took Him to be. He did not really come in the flesh. He did indeed *seem* to be one of us; He took His place alongside of us; He made common cause with us against the devil; He came to save us; yet His appearing among us was, after all, only one of those Theophanies with which the Old Testament makes us acquainted.

> "A mortal shape, to Him
> Was like the vapour dim
> Which the orient planet animates with light."

As speculation advanced, the Christian facts one by one disappeared or were etherealized into something thinner than air; and the Gospel story lost its meaning, its truth, and its power. If Jesus Christ was not really the Word made flesh, but a phantasm, certain inevitable consequences followed. For one thing He stood in no true relation of brotherhood to us; He was not truly "born a Saviour." Nor were His sufferings real sufferings. When He was tempted in the wilderness, He sustained no real assault; when He wandered over the land, He was not really fatigued; when He sat on Jacob's Well, He was not really weary; when He bowed in Gethsemane, the agony was but in appearance; the blood-shedding on the cross was only an illusory show.

As an indication how such views took hold on men's minds, a writer, long after the time of John—described as

the Trumpet of the Latin Church—in contention with the Arians, says, "Ye will not allow that when the nails pierced His palms, He felt no pain;" and the same writer affirms that "our Saviour's body was no more susceptible of pain from a wound than the surface of water from a spear or javelin thrust into it." We look out at times from some commanding height over a rich and beautiful landscape, smiling in the sun, and have difficulty in bringing home to ourselves that where the husbandman now guides the plough, and the cottage smoke curls up in the peaceful air, there was once waged a life and death warfare, in which the fortunes and freedom of a nation were at stake. The words that I have quoted above are mere rubbish to us now; but they mark where battle-strife was formerly waged, that has secured for us the peaceful enjoyment of the truth.

Some very serious consequences result if such views as those ancient speculatists contended for were true. The death of Jesus could be no real sacrifice for sin. If Bethlehem be explained away, so must Calvary be, and all that wounding for our transgressions and bruising for our iniquities. Nor could Jesus really sympathize with us, inasmuch as He did not experience what we really experience. He would know our frame, because He made us; but we lose the comfort of believing in One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. And still farther, He ceases to be an example to us. We see Him moving about without sin—it is a beautiful picture, but it is nothing more; it gives us no help or encouragement, for He never was (like us) "in chains and fetters of the flesh." In this way, though men did not at the outset perceive that it must be so, the whole Christian system, both in its facts and its truths, melts away, the only residuum left being a series of

purely visionary transactions, like what we fancy in our dreams.

The moral consequences were not less deplorable. Virtue indeed would still be infinitely lovely; right would still be right, and wrong would still be wrong; but men's search would be directed to seek the key of the universe through speculation rather than submit like little children, and attain to holiness through Him who is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Those who led in this speculative course "laid the axe to the root of all morality; they withered up the love of God in man's heart." *

It will not therefore surprise any one that the Apostle, discerning the harvest in the seed, should warn his little children so earnestly that in embracing such views as were then being introduced they were rejecting Christ; nor need we wonder at his using words so energetic as "liar," "false prophets," "antichrists," "children of the devil." While Christianity, dealing with the mightiest problems that concern human beings, goes down to humanly unfathomable depths, and up to humanly unreachable altitudes, of thought, yet in its historical forthcoming it starts from certain facts that true, honest men could witness to, and that the simplest and least cultured may apprehend. The facts have value, not merely as they body forth or express certain great truths —not merely as they form the pitcher in which the Water of Life is held—but *in themselves*, as pertaining to Christ's redeeming work. The *Pilgrim's Progress* loses nothing—rather gains—when the reader discovers that the facts never happened; but the facts of the Gospel have inherent and substantive value, apart from and beyond their fitness for expressing truth. The death of Christ, for example, does

---

* *Dr. James Donaldson*: "*Critical History of Christian Literature and Doctrine.*"

not merely declare God's righteousness and love, but is a sacrifice for sin, even as He said, "My blood is shed for the remission of sins." His resurrection from the dead not only tells of a living God, but is the first stage in Christ's advancement to supreme dominion. If the facts can be cleared out of the way, if the supernatural can be resolved into the ideal, there will be but slight difficulty in turning the Gospel into a theology vapid, powerless, and comfortless, or making an end of it altogether. If the facts are accepted, then Christianity is felt to be no mere theory, excogitated in the closet and to be debated by philosophers, but a Divine institution resting on a basis solid as a rock, firm as adamant.

Hence it is that John affirms with such clearness that he "heard," "saw," "gazed upon," "handled," the manifested Word of Life; and that he makes this the very test of truth—"Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." *

The Epistle itself, called forth by the condition and needs of the churches, is characterized by great simplicity, freshness, and spiritual depth. It has an inexpressible charm for those to whom the religion of Jesus is a "religion of the heart." To the mere logician there may appear to be a hopeless incoherency of thought in it—the garrulous repe-

---

* "Ah! to how many Faith has been
No evidence of things unseen,
But a dim shadow, that recasts
The creed of the Phantasiasts;
For whom no Man of Sorrows died,
For whom the Tragedy Divine
Was but a symbol and a sign,
And Christ—a Phantom crucified!"

Robert Browning.

titions of a kindly old man, whose memory is beginning to fail him, and who has lost the thread of his story. This however is the logician's error. The disorder of ideas is only seeming. In reality they are linked one to another, in the firmest and most natural spiritual sequence, by links indeed that are deep out of sight, but that are surely traced by the contemplative and loving heart. The "simplicities" are the deep and wise and holy simplicities of the Spirit of God. The Epistle runs as follows, the variations from the English text being those in regard to which Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles are agreed:

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we gazed upon and our hands handled,* concerning the Word of Life—(and the Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the life eternal which was with† the Father, and was manifested to us)—what we have seen and heard declare we also to you,‡ that ye also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship truly is with the Father

---

* The words "*seen with our eyes*," "*gazed upon*" and "*handled*," added to the word "*heard*," forbid our thinking of mere dogmas and abstractions, and call up before us the living Christ. John had known Him in flesh and blood; had talked with Him; had seen His ways and doings; and hence he testifies with a positiveness and assurance in which there is no shade of hesitance. He takes us out of the region of argument and speculation, and uncertainty; bears witness to what he has seen and known; and reports the message that he had received from the Son of God.

† "*Which was such as was with—the same kind of life that was with—the Father.*" He that believeth hath eternal life. What is this "life"? Is it pardon and deliverance from condemnation? Is it happiness? Or what is it? God has answered our questions by sending His Son into the world, *There, in Jesus, is the Life I mean;* and the Apostles deliver their report, *The Life was manifested, and we have seen it.*

‡ Not in this present Epistle, but in our Gospel testimony. The Epistle *assumes* such testimony, certainly oral, possibly also written in his Gospel.

and with His Son Jesus Christ: and these things write we to you, that our joy may be made full.

"And this is the message which we have heard of Him and tell over again unto you, that God is light, and darkness in Him there is none.* If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as He [*Himself*] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [*our*] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned,† we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

"My little children, I write these things to you in order that ye may not sin: and if any one sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is [*Himself*] Propitiation ‡ for our sins; yet not for ours only, but also for the whole world.§

---

* It is impossible to tell out all that lies in that word "*Light.*" As every one who hath ears to hear is addressed when John testifies concerning "the Word," so every one who has eyes to see is addressed when it is said that God is Light. Light reveals. Very painful its revelations may be. Very painful therefore it may be to walk in it. A man who has fallen in the mire gets on comfortably enough so long as he walks *in the dark:* nobody sees him; he does not see himself: but he does not like to be pushed into a brightly-lighted room. The light shows the state he is in. *God's* light reveals our sinfulness. It does not purify, but shows the need of purifying. Then the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

† "Not sinned" *since when?* Evidently since we became His. It is inconceivable that any believer should say he had not sinned *prior* to conversion. That would be to justify the old life, and to deny the need of the blood of Christ.

‡ Not, "He *makes* propitiation," but "He *is* the Propitiation."

§ The aim of the writing is, that we may not sin at all; in other words, may attain complete holiness. The Advocate is not One who persuades the

"And herein we know that we have known [*know*] Him,* if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I have known [*know*] Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth His word, in this [*man*] truly is the love of God perfected;† herein we know that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He [*Christ Jesus*] walked.

"Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: this old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which [*thing*] is true in Him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.‡ He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and

---

Father to wink at our faults; but in whom we have an assured and abiding standing as God's sons, so that we may come back when we have erred, and confess our faults, and obtain His grace. No provision is made for future sinning, by an arrangement beforehand, of the nature of an indulgence; but a Divine meeting of our sense of guilt when we think of the irrevocable past. There is no other advocate or propitiation for any man in the whole world: none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. The Apostle by his "*we*" includes himself among those who need the advocacy. The struggle against sin is not a hopeless one, in which defeat is inevitable: God is for us and with us.

* Have attained the knowledge and continue in it. "*Him*" is not Christ, but the Father.

† Has really attained its proposed design.

‡ The New and the Old are one and the same. One takes up the Gospel message, which came forth so freshly and mightily more than eighteen centuries ago. It seems very old. Possibly it is so familiar to our ear as to have lost its once-experienced power to gladden. We do not like to confess that it is so; but we feel about it as if it were a thrice-told tale. An old commandment, we say; we felt it once, but it does not touch us now. Yet one day, perhaps of sorrow, perhaps of joy, it suddenly

walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness blinded his eyes.*

"I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because ye have known† Him [*that is*] from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome the Wicked One. I have written‡ to you, little children, because ye have known [know] the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known Him [*that is*] from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the Wicked One.

"Love not the world, neither the [*things that are*] in the world. If any [*man*] love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all [*that is*] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now are there risen many antichrists,§ whence we know that it is the last hour. They went

---

shines out before us with new light—and the old commandment which we heard from the beginning becomes a new commandment, as if met with for the first time. Not outworn, but fresh as yesterday.

* Blinded them in the very entering.

† *And continue to know;* and so throughout the Epistle.

‡ Epistolary aorist.

§ John recognizes *the* Antichrist as distinctly as Paul recognizes the Man of Sin—in whom the Apostacy is concentrated, and whose rise immediately precedes Christ's glorious appearing. These "many antichrists" are, so to speak, his forerunners, bearing a moral resemblance to him. They prepare his way. In both cases there is the retention of the Christian name, with enmity at the heart. All things have their doubles. There is Christ and Antichrist, the "Harlot" arrayed in purple and scarlet, tossing her jewelled head, and the Bride, the Lamb's wife; Babylon, the mock city that sin has built, and the New Jerusalem.

out from among us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but [*they went out*] that they might be made manifest that none of them are of us.* And ye [*for your part*] have an Unction† from the Holy One, and ye know all things.‡ I have not written to you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it and that no lie is of the truth.§ Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?‖ This is the antichrist, who denieth the Father and the Son. He that denieth the Son, neither hath he the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.

"You [*for your part*] let that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you. If that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning, ye also shall abide in the Son

---

* Not "*were*" but "*are* of us." At the time of John's writing they still claimed the Christian name which the Apostle refuses to them.

† Chrism: not *the act of anointing*, but *the anointing oil*; here the Spirit.

‡ The emphasis does not lie on the word "*all*." They were not omniscient. The emphasis lies on the word "*know*." Take the things that God has revealed, and respecting which He imparts teaching; ye have no longer notions and shifting opinions: ye *know* the things. This knowing is the result of the "Unction." The passage is correlative to the promise of Jesus, *When the Spirit is come, He shall teach you all things.* Tauler says, "The Holy Ghost will not teach us all things, so that we shall know whether there will be a good harvest and vintage, whether bread will be dear or cheap, whether the present war will come to an end soon; but all things which we can need for a perfect life and for a knowledge of the hidden truth of God." The "*all things*" are included in the next line under the expression "*the truth*." Bengel remarks that "Scripture is not wont to say in the plural, *truths*. Truth is one and a whole."

§ Then what about all pious frauds? What about all false emphasis laid on one line of truth so as to lead to the undervaluing of the line beside it? What about a writer giving forth a work of his own composition, and getting it accepted as the Gospel of John?

‖ He is the liar *par excellence:* he has got hold of the seed-lie, as deadly a lie as that of the Fool, who hath said in his heart, "*No God.*"

and in the Father. And this is the promise which He Himself promised to us,* the life eternal. These things have I written to you concerning those who are deceiving you. And as for you, the Unction which ye have received from Him abideth in you, and ye have no need that some one teach you: but as the same Unction teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him; that when [*He*] shall be manifested, we may have boldness [*of speech*],† and not be shamed from Him in His coming.

"If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called [*receive the name*] children of God!‡ And we are: therefore the world knoweth§ us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet manifested what we are to be: we know that when it shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

---

* That is, promised with His own lips.

† Not "*courage*" in the general, but "*free-spokenness*," through our sense of being in Him. It marks that state of mind in which, even when we *do not* speak, we *might* do so with freedom and fearlessness. Its opposite is seen in the man at the wedding feast, who, when the king challenged him, *was speechless*. "In His coming," when He and we shall meet.

‡ Not υἱοὶ, who might be sons by a mere act of *adoption*, but τέκνα, *born* into his family by regeneration.

§ Lay emphasis on *knoweth*, rather than on *not* or *us*. A and B are next-door neighbours, both poor. A prospers in the world, while B, though good and true, remains in humble circumstances. After long separation, they meet again. B is going to claim old acquaintance, but A turns superciliously away. "Ah," says B, "he does not *know* me now." Not, "he does *not* know me:" he really *does* know, but does not wish to recognize or be recognized. The world did not *know* the Son of God; saw nothing Divine in His life: how can the world know us? It is not every eye that sees an oak in an acorn—or a saint's halo encircling a poor man's head.

"And every one that hath this hope on Him * purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.† And ye know that He was manifested to take away sins,‡ and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth § seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. Little children, let no one deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous; he that doeth sin is of the devil,‖ for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.¶ Whosoever is begotten of God doeth not sin, for His seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil.

---

* That is, on Him, whom we shall see as He is—Christ Jesus.

† Not *the transgression of the law*; the word goes deeper. In the region of our Divine relations, "law" is the uttered will of God, whether the uttering be in secret to the conscience or in the words of a statute-book. Sin involves the setting of that will aside—ignoring it—refusing it—taking our own way: *i.e.*, sin is lawlessness. Consider Rom. ii. 12-14; iv. 15; v. 13.

‡ More is involved than disposing of our guilt. The expression looks forward to the teaching that follows, in which we learn that he who is begotten of God "*sinneth not.*" No doubt his legal standing is all right; but it is his moral conduct that is brought into view.

§ The description of the man's life: whosoever liveth the old ungodly life—the "worker of iniquity"—not to be confounded with the brother overtaken in a fault.

‖ The "fruit" of the one life is *righteousness*; that of the other is *sin*. On a good tree there may be some worthless or bad apples. Yet the tree is known by its fruit.

¶ The account of the design of His manifestation is very comprehensive. We are to note that it was not to reveal duty merely, nor to show what comes of disobedience; but to undo what the devil has done. He is the Physician who undertakes an otherwise hopeless case, and expels the poison from the blood. Hence the life-warmth, freshness, and glory of the gospel; hence the story of the Advent is "good tidings of great joy" for evermore. Reducing the work of Christ to mere enlightenment and example, and missing out "salvation," the gospel loses all its meaning and power, and Christ becomes a mere teacher of morals, or doctor of philosophy.

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, and he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain was of the Wicked One, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were wicked, but his brother's righteous. Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you.* We [*for our part*] know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not abideth in death.† He that hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Herein have we known Love,‡ because He laid down His life for us; and we [*for our part*] ought to lay down [*our*] lives for the brethren.§ But whoso hath the world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [*of compassion*] from him, how abideth the love of God in him? Little children, let us not love with word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth.‖

"In this shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if [*our*] heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth

---

* The world's hatred is one of the "vouchers" of their belonging to Christ, and of God's "Father-love."

† The state of hatred is thus identified with death—as love is with life.

‡ The words "*of God*" are added in our English version as a supplement. They are not only unnecessary, but tempt us off the line of thought. If you would know the very type of Love, to which all true love conforms, it is here,—"*He laid down His life for us.*" It is silently taken for granted that every Christian will have in mind for what holy ends that Life was laid down. The laying down of that Life is the fullest interpretation of the word "*Love*" ever given to man—perhaps to the universe.

§ To be a Christian involved danger of death *then*. *Now* it is respectable, even fashionable. But the truth of the profession is still to be determined by the existence of self-sacrificing love.

‖ It is a "deed" to give a suffering brother five pounds: it is not "in truth" if the gift would have been only a shilling but for the publicity.

all things.* Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness [*of speech*] with God. And whatsoever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the [*things that are*] pleasing in His sight.† And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him.‡ And herein we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit that He gave us.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.§ In this ye know the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh || is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God; and this is the [*spirit*] of the Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh, and now already is it in the world. Ye [*for your part*], little children, are of God, and have overcome them; because greater is He [*that is*]

---

* Obviously there is *awe* in this consideration—in so far as the condemnation of our heart is faint and uncertain, while God speaks according to truth. But there is also *joy*. Our heart sometimes condemns us wrongfully; we write bitter things against ourselves; we question whether we are God's children at all. What a comfort is the word, "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things!" *He* makes no mistakes of this sort.

† "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (Psalm lxvi. 18; James iv. 3.)

‡ As with two friends, each abides in the other's heart. The lower fact is a parable of the higher. Only the higher is above the lower, as heaven is above the earth.

§ Then there is to be no traffic with any untried spirit. We must first know if the spirit is "*of God.*" The Apostle fixes upon a Shibboleth for spirits—the utterance of the heart-truth of Christianity.

|| "Come *in*—not *into*—flesh;" *i.e.*, it was not a Divine Æon that entered the man at his baptism. It is obvious to me that John is not dealing in this paragraph with developed Gnosticism. A writer living (say) in the year 150, must have used different forms of expression.

in you, than he [*that is*] in the world. They* are of the world; therefore speak they [*what is*] of the world, and the world heareth them: we are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not never knew God; for God is love.† In this was manifested the love of God in us, that God hath sent His Son, the Only-begotten, into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son [*to be*] a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No [*man*] hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Herein we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. We also have seen and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son [*as*] Saviour of the world.‡ Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath in us.§ God is love, and

---

* The false prophets. They are worldly men; not children of God. Hence their words belong to the world's level, and please the world's ear. The "Golden Legend" puts the devil in a pulpit and makes him preach what many would count a very fine sermon—which indeed it is, as Swift's or Sterne's are fine.

† The term cannot be defined. A definition implies finiteness, and that we have gone round the finite thing, and drawn the bounding-line. Here this is an impossibility. Love is God's very essence: it is *Himself*. What we call his "Attributes," are but Love in action or manifestation.

‡ Yea, with all its bigness, all its guilt, all its woe. There is none besides; but there is need of none besides.

§ It is more than "*toward us*." The love has reached us, and penetrated our hearts. It is "*in us*," and hence is called, immediately after, "*love with us*." It is the Divine in the human. Winer, from the grammarian's point of view, finds fault with the interpreters, "who *will* smuggle in the preposition *to* or *toward*.

he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him. Herein is love with us made perfect, that we should have boldness [*of speech*] in the Day of Judgment; because as He is,* are we also in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear;† because fear hath torment;‡ but he that feareth is not made perfect in love.§ We love, because He first loved us.‖ If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar;¶ for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

"Every one who believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; and every one who loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. Herein we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments; and His commandments

---

* Not *As He was*, but *As He is*. It is not that His earthly life is proposed as our example, to be reproduced in us. But a blessed *fact* is announced, to be realized by believers.

† Love that is not perfect—that is not sure of another's heart—is full of tremblings and anxieties: as, *e.g.*, in a mother toward her son. And love can never be perfect until it is sure of another's heart. That is perfect love Godward which is sure of God's heart. The perfectness of God's love thus becomes the ground for perfectness in mine.

‡ Strictly, punishment. The torment *is* the punishment of fear.

§ A trembling, timid soul may have *real* love; yet, real as it is, it is not perfect. Such love is of the *quality* that the Apostle speaks of, but it has not the *e*-quality.

‖ Not that we love Him back again—constrained by gratitude, or by a sense of duty. Even in the case of two human hearts, love kindles love: and the kindled love can give no farther account of itself than is given here.

¶ To lie is not merely to say "the thing that is not;" for one may do so under a mistaken impression; it is to say "the thing that is not," *knowing it to be the thing that is not.* In the light of this, the Christian professor who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar. His whole life is a perpetual lie. He "behaves" a lie.

are not grievous. For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh * the world [*even*] our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

"This is He that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and in the blood;† and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood; and the three agree in one.‡ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness—that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he hath not believed in the witness which God hath witnessed concerning His Son. And this is the witness, that God gave to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not the life.

"These things have I written unto you, that ye may know § that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness

---

* That did overcome and that goes on overcoming, just as the world's forces are brought out against us. *Our faith* is the victorious principle. Compare with Paul's words, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."

† The water (of baptism) and the blood (of the cross) are the two *termini* of His public ministry—*a quo* and *ad quem*.

‡ That the omitted passage was not written by the Apostle John must unquestionably be accepted. Here are "three tokens by which Jesus as the Son of God has revealed Himself; indicating at the same time three combined relations in which He presents Himself to the Christian consciousness as the One incarnate Son of God . . . . The Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, all have reference to one and the same object, and all concur in revealing and accrediting Jesus as the Son of God."—*Neander*.

§ Not by information *ab extra*, but by consciousness.

[*of speech*] that we have with Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us:* and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked from Him.† If any one see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and shall give life to him, [*even*] to those who sin not unto death: not concerning that do I say that he shall pray. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death.‡

"We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the Wicked One toucheth him not. We know that we § are of God, and the whole world lieth in the Wicked [One]. But we know || that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding that we may know the True; and

---

* There is no room here for the mistake of those who fancy that they will get whatever they ask, *if only they work themselves up into the assurance that God will give it.* A boy would like to possess a pistol. He says to himself, *I will ask my father for one; and if I am only confident of getting it, my father will give it.* Is that faith in his father? If his father had given him reason to expect it—and if his request had been grounded on some intimation of his father's will—he would have been right in his confidence, not otherwise. *The prayer of faith grounds itself on something in God.* That word, "according to His will," must never be lost sight of.

† Either in present possession or certain reversion. But there must be "asking." The things will not be thrust upon us.

‡ I do not see any warrant here for the distinction between "venial" and "mortal" sins, in the Roman Catholic sense. There is a region fully known to God, but not defined to us, within which intercession for others does not avail. Our prayer is no interference with His sovereign rights. All that is done is to take the case of some men out of the number for whom intercessory prayer prevails.

§ There is a temptation for English lips to emphasize this "*we*," as if the idea were, "*We, in distinction from others, are of God.*" The word, however, is unemphatic, not being expressed in the original.

|| Note this thrice-repeated "*We know.*" It is as much as to say, *This—and this—and this is a settled matter.* The three conclusions may be regarded as a summing-up of the truths set forth in the Epistle.

we are in the True, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and Life Eternal.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." *

The remaining two Epistles are "the spillings of the heart;" but it is a heart of rarest wisdom and grace.

The SECOND EPISTLE is a private letter to a Christian lady—advanced to at least middle life, her name perhaps Cyria, or Eclecta Cyria—who was widely loved. Whatever womanly graciousness may have characterized her, that which won for her this wide love was the dwelling of the truth in her: it was this which made her what she was.

We know nothing of her personally, beyond what comes out in this short letter. She does not seem to have been specially eminent in the Church; at all events her name has not found its way into ecclesiastical history—scarcely (if at all) into ecclesiastical fable. She was no Sister of Mercy or Nun, but a Christian wife and mother, with children who had grown up at her knee, and whom she had taught to love "The Name." Shortly before writing his letter, John had met some of them away from home, who showed that they walked in truth. Like another Lydia, who constrained Paul and his companions to accept her hospitality, she opened her house and dispensed her bounty to those who came forth bearing with them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those whom she thus received into her house might be fairly represented by the brethren who after the

* The commonest justification of images or idols is that they give definitiveness to our spiritual conceptions, and help us nearer to the True One. As against idolatry or the worship of false divinities, the manifestation of God in His Son is the true safeguard. The idols from which they were to keep themselves were the idols that existed all around.

death of Stephen "went everywhere preaching the word:" or later by such a man as Justin Martyr, who after his conversion seems to have travelled about from land to land as an evangelist, proclaiming the truth he had found.

The letter which John writes to this lady is very gracious and beautiful. There was danger that her hospitality might be taken advantage of for antichristian purposes, by men who, professing to preach Christ, really denied Him. She must use holy discrimination. "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an antichrist." The consequences involved in a denial of the true humanity of the Lord—or in the mystification of the truth—might not at first be obvious: the Gnostic doctrine indeed might seem to be an exalting of Him, and a setting of His holiness in clearer light; but to the Apostle it was utterly hateful, because utterly false and insidiously deadly. Hence he writes to this Christian lady, warning her not to give it countenance. He knows that she loves the Truth, and would do nothing against it: let her not then open her doors to those who were spreading error disguised under a holy name.

The charge which John gives is an antidote to that so-called "liberality" to which truth and falsehood are alike, and which generally ends in hating truth with a murderous hatred. Whatever may be done from Christian compassion or kindness, let it be done without hesitation or fear; but let it be done *as* compassion or kindness—in the spirit of the good Samaritan: John finds no fault with it, and throws no hindrance in its way. But keep the distinction clear between doing a deed of Christian beneficence and giving help to antichristian error. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not in your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-

speed is partaker of his evil deeds." There is a time for everything; and there is a time for crucifying mere good nature as well as the lusts of the flesh. The letter runs:—

"The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth *—and not I only, but also all that know the truth—for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and will be with us for ever. Grace, mercy, and peace shall be with you from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

"I rejoiced greatly that I have found among thy children those who walk in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as writing to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments: and this is the commandment, as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.† For many deceivers went out ‡ into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh:§ this is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.|| Whosoever goeth before ¶ and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God: whosoever abideth in the teaching, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any one to you, and he bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into [*your*]

---

* Not merely, *whom I love truly*, but whom I love in the same truth in which I found children of thine walking.

† *In it, i.e.*, not *in the commandment*, but *in love*. The Apostle seems to be moving in a circle; but experience understands it.

‡ From the Church.

§ They reject or evade the idea of incarnation out and out.

|| Wages; the fruit of Christian labour.

¶ As a spiritual leader or guide. The shepherd goes before the sheep.

house, neither bid him God-speed ;* for bidding him God-speed [*one*] is partaker of his evil deeds.

"Having many things to write to you, I would not [*write*] with paper and ink ; for I hope to come to you and speak mouth to mouth, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee."

The THIRD EPISTLE is also a private letter, addressed to a Christian gentleman of the name of Caius or Gaius. We know nothing of him except what we learn from this letter, though I believe tradition has raised him to a bishopric. We recognize in him a man of high character, but somewhat weakly in health, and perhaps standing also on the cold side of the world's favour. He is one of the Apostle's "children," whom he joys to see walking in truth, and in whose behalf he prays "that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." The letter is about the same length as the preceding one, and is a companion to it. The Christian lady is forewarned against giving countenance to false teachers: Gaius is commended for showing hospitality to the true.

The story lying behind the letter is a very simple one. Certain Christian evangelists had gone forth on a missionary tour ("in behalf of The Name they went forth"), taking nothing of the Gentiles. One of the band, probably a leading member of it, was Demetrius—one who had good report of all, yea, of the truth itself—his success in bringing men to Christ being witness in his behalf. These friends did not wander from place to place unknown, but were properly accredited. It appears even that they were intro-

* Do not give him greeting. Let not your house be made a base of operations again Christ. The test of Christian love is the maintenance of Christian truth.

duced by John himself:—"I wrote (he says) unto the Church:" so that, though personally strangers, they were sufficiently attested as true men.

Diotrephes, however, refused to receive them. I imagine Diotrephes to have been a church pastor somewhere—perhaps wealthy—a somewhat priestly and overbearing man—with a strong will, a keen scent for heresy, and some considerable power over the Church; just such a man as is brought into view by Peter's phrase, "*lording it over God's heritage.*" This man not merely refused to receive the brethren, but excommunicated those who did. The "elect lady" may have been too facile and unsuspicious; Diotrephes goes to the opposite extreme. Very likely he had his list of cases in which unworthy men had come in under false pretences and done harm—"false brethren"—"wolves in sheep's clothing"—and so he sets his face against the whole thing.

It would seem that Gaius had come into trouble with Diotrephes in consequence of befriending some of these evangelists: in John's hearing they had testified before the Church to the kindness of Gaius; and John expresses his pleasure at this, and his intention of bringing up, at the proper time, the conduct of Diotrephes for censure.

The letter has abiding value by reason of its bearing on evangelistic work. We must be careful what men we back up. But when servants of the Lord, bringing the Truth, come to us properly accredited, we should help them forward after a godly sort; for in so doing we help the Truth itself.

Here is the THIRD LETTER also.

"The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

"Beloved, I wish that in all respects thou mayest

prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified to thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy than this I have none, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

"Beloved, thou doest faithfully * whatsoever thou doest toward the brethren (and that toward strangers) who bore witness to thy love before the Church;† whom if thou send forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well; for on behalf of The Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles:‡ we therefore ought to receive § such persons, that we may become fellow-workers for the truth. I wrote somewhat to the Church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his deeds which he doeth,‖ prating against us with wicked words; and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and those who would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the Church.¶ Beloved, do not thou imitate the evil, but the good. He that doeth good is of God; he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

---

* Not in the sense of *conscientiously*, but as a deed of Christian faith. The meaning is, Thy work which thou hast done is work of faith.

† In open assembly.

‡ Individuals belonging to the nations, as we would say, *heathen men*. There is an abiding principle in what Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them forth two and two. They were not to provide gold or silver or brass in their purses; they were to take no scrip for their journey, neither two coats nor shoes nor yet staves: in other words, they were not to live on their private fortunes. How then? "The workman is worthy of his meat:" the Lord will deal with them on this footing; and will provide for their temporal needs through means of those whose hearts are opened to receive their message. This was no false start.

§ The idea is to receive and help on, as we speak of *taking one by the hand*.

‖ It is not merely that John will *bear in mind* this man's deeds, but will *recal* them, for censure and for the warning of others.

¶ Depriving them of membership.

"To Demetrius testimony hath been borne by all, and by the truth itself; yea, we also bear testimony, and thou knowest that our testimony is true.

"I had many things to write to thee, but I wish not to write to thee with ink and pen; but I hope immediately to see thee, and we shall speak mouth to mouth.

"Peace be to thee. The friends greet thee. Greet the friends by name."

Attention is being more and more powerfully drawn to the writings of this Apostle, and inquiry evoked. I need not point out what possible dangers this exposes to; they will readily occur to any one who reflects. It is not in our power, even were it desirable, to draw a line, and say to the spirit of inquiry, *Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.* We cannot thus escape difficulty. Men must and will scan the whole range of truth, and will open up afresh questions that had been regarded as permanently settled.

If I read rightly, the questions that lie immediately in advance are not exactly those that have been agitated between Calvinist and Arminian, but different and quite as vital. To fancy that inquiry can be hushed as dangerous, or that speculative questions can be evaded, is a profound mistake; and it is not good for us to keep our eyes shut. Where then is our security against error? Not, as I believe, in ecclesiastical forms, or in intensifying our dogmatic utterances. Not in high education and great intellectual abilities; for "the natural man," however able and highly educated, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." With the aid of a grammar and lexicon, one may interpret Scripture after a fashion; but cannot rightly apprehend *the thoughts* unless through a heartfelt sense of sin, a quickened con-

science, and faith in God, as He is manifested in His Only-begotten Son, the suffering Saviour, who "came into the world to bless it, and was tortured and slain there, and went out wearing a crown of thorns." Our true security, as I believe, lies in our spirituality—in our being men and women who are born of God, reverent and truth-loving, to whom the "Unction from the Holy One" is no mere figure of speech, but a deep and blessed reality.

VIII.

The Theologian.

THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS. DIFFERENT MODES OF PRESENTING THE SAME TRUTH. JOHN'S STARTING-POINT. THE WORD. MANIFESTED HUMANLY. SPHERE OF THE MANIFESTATION. ITS CHARACTER AND PURPOSE. THE HOLY SPIRIT. "FOR JUDGMENT AM I COME." SINNING AND NOT SINNING. FAITH AND UNBELIEF. STANDING OF BELIEVERS. THE FUTURE.

TAKING up the New Testament and examining it, we find that it consists of twenty-seven separate books, bound together. They were not given all at once, and to a single church, but came forth (so to speak) by instalments, just as the writers of them were "moved" and as providential circumstances required. Probably the writers could no more explain the moving than we can, and had no more notice of its approach than we have of the approach of a dream. There was no plan, or concert, or common understanding among them; no intentional division of labour; no comparing of notes; nor were the separate writings formed into a single collection till long after the death of the last of the Apostles. Indeed, it was only by degrees that the true importance of the writings for the preservation and propagation of the truth came to be recognized by believers.

Through these writings Christianity gets (so to speak) a *root* in our human soil, which keeps it fresh and living down

the centuries. As time passed on, the enemies of the Gospel began to perceive the vital importance of these writings to the life of Christianity; and the last, the most skilful and the deadliest, of the heathen "persecutions" was aimed at their extermination. Christian congregations might be scattered to the four winds—penal enactments against Christianity might be enforced in the strictest manner; but the progress of the faith (it was perceived) was not thereby arrested. It became evident that the writings must be extirpated. This was the aim of the Dioclesian persecution, which extended throughout the Empire, from east to west, and which utterly failed; as had formerly happened with the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to destroy the Old Testament, and thereby to annihilate the worship of Jehovah.

As the writings are studied, it becomes evident to the student that they form a *unity*. It is not merely that they are bound together within the same boards and have the same title-page, but there is one soul inspiring them. The unity is a unity of varied life. Having many members, they form one body.

Every reader perceives that they fall into four groups: first, the four Gospels; second, the Book of Acts, exhibiting the planting of Christianity in a four-fold soil, "Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin," and Barbarian; third, the Epistolary writings which exhibit Christian doctrine, and which have also a fourfold character, represented by the names of James, Peter (with whom Jude is to be associated), Paul, and John; fourth, the prophetic Book of Revelation.

In studying them, they should be taken up, as far as possible, each by each in historic order, and read in the light of the life-experience of their writers, and of the condition, circumstances, and prospects of the churches or individuals addressed; the *Heart-thought* of each should be

firmly seized, and it should be seen how the other ideas cluster around. When we have read the New Testament writings thus, ascertaining the drift of the separate books, we shall be able from the standpoint of each writer, and finally from a standpoint commanding the field, to perceive the unity of the truth as it is in Jesus.

In distinguishing the teaching of the New Testament writers, I insinuate no variance between them—nothing that might grow into a contradiction. But the Divine Spirit has divided severally to them, as has seemed to Him meet, and it is our wisdom to observe this Divinely-created difference.

Standing nearest to the old economy appears the Apostle James. His theology is the least developed of any of the New Testament writers. His Epistle, addressed to the "twelve tribes" in dispersion, reads like a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount. I think it belongs to an early period of Christian history—undoubtedly before Paul had written his Epistle to the Romans.* It is generally—and indeed naturally—approached from the practical side: I believe it will richly repay deeper study than it has received from the doctrinal side. The heart-thought of it seems to be *morality rooted in Christ.*

The heart-thought of Peter's theology we have in the words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The doctrinal ideas set forth by Paul are familiar to the great majority of Christian people. They are the staple of

* I cannot think that James states his doctrine of "justification by works" to guard Paul's doctrine of "justification by faith" against licentious abuse. The utterances of the two apostles are perfectly independent, and—to any ordinary comprehension, not looking out for contradictions—perfectly harmonious.

what is commonly named Evangelical theology.* Starting from man's sinfulness in the presence of a Law that is holy and just and good, and uprooting man's last hope of being his own Saviour, he exhibits God's way of dealing with guilt and with an evil heart, in the mediation of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, leading us on to the final completion of salvation in the day of Christ, according to God's eternal purpose of grace which He purposed in Himself.

As soon as we pass from the writings of Paul to those of John, we find ourselves in fellowship with a mind of a totally different cast—not at all dialectic, but intensely and profoundly intuitive. While he is equally the organ of the Spirit of God, and while the truths dealt with are in substance the same, yet the manner of conceiving and building them together is very different. The difference shows itself in the great words that are used. Paul's words are such as these—sin, grace, righteousness, election, redemption, faith, reconciliation, salvation, the day of Christ: John's words are such as these—life and death, light and darkness, love and hatred, truth and a lie, the Son of God and the Wicked One.

Were I to select characteristic and corresponding utterances from Paul and John, they would be these two:

* The majority of Evangelical believers do not seem very able to conceive of New Testament doctrine, save as it is represented by this Apostle. A noticeable fact is, that for one commentary on John, since the time of the Reformation, we find at least ten on Paul. And even of those commentaries which deal with John, many take him as if his writings were a continuation of Paul's, and exhibit the same logical tone and spirit as in dealing with Paul. The majority also of what are called *Symbolical Books* show no sign (or only the faintest) of John's impress. I do not point this out by way of fault-finding, but only as matter of fact. There can be no question of the grandeur of the Pauline ideas, even in their imperfect apprehension by us. Under God, the glory of our post-Reformation life and theology is due to them.

from Paul—"*Just and the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;*" from John—"*This is the true God and eternal life.*" These utterances may suffice to illustrate how the lines of thought pursued by the two Apostles are parallel and harmonious, while yet they lie on different planes.

In this chapter I desire to exhibit the character of John's doctrine as distinguished from that of the other New Testament writers,—unto each of whom "is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We shall find that it is no mere theological jelly, soft and luscious, but quite as strong meat as the doctrine of Paul. It is an exhibition of the elements of Divine truth, set forth in the simplest and homeliest terms, yet with the utmost profundity. We shall find also that there is no balancing of probabilities and nothing of that torturous suspense which is the misery of our age. He is positive in his testifying with a Yea that is Yea and a Nay that is Nay.

The starting-point for thought is the conception of the Eternal "Word"—"the Word of life,"—"the Eternal Life* which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." We must not attempt simplification by emptying the name, "Word," of its profound meaning. We must not resolve it into Voice or Decree or Sentence, or even into a personification of the "Divine reason," thus robbing it of its personalness. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to give John's statements concerning *The Word* logical definiteness; and it seems not necessary that we should do so. It is enough to recognize a timeless Being whom he affirms to be Divine, and who expresses all that belongs to the Divine nature.

Very ingenious and learned inquiries have been prose-

* It is worth while for the student of Scripture to compare the name, "*The Eternal Life,*" with its parallel, the Old Testament "*Jehovah.*" Does not "*The Eternal Life*" yield the Jehovah-idea?

cuted, which trace its use in the school represented by Philo. There is one essential difference between Philo and John. While both (if I understand rightly) regard *The Word* as a Person, the former regards Him as a created being, although the image and glory of God, or at best a second God; the latter pronounces Him from "the Beginning," and by inference uncreated and eternal. He unfolds the *Divine idea* contained in the name in distinction from the false notions of men. Just as Paul said at Athens, respecting the Unknown God—"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you;" so in effect John says, redeeming the name from its lower use—Whom ye ignorantly call The Word, Him declare I unto you, in His timeless being; in His personality; in His Godhead; in His creatorship; in His action in the universe as light and life; in His manifestation in the flesh, full of grace and truth, giving of His fulness, and declaring the Father unto men. All Divine revelations and workings in the universe are (and ever have been) through Him. Even in the darkness His light shineth, and the darkness comprehended it not.

There is no choice between accepting a universe created by the Divine will, and Pantheism; no third form of belief is intellectually possible; no rational foothold exists for the Atheist.

According to the Pantheist, "God" is but a name for the Sum of Being—the infinite and impersonal All—cause and effect in one. Man is but God thinking, and man's mind part of the infinite mind. We live and move and have our being "*in Him*," in the same sense in which my hand or foot is "*in me*." As Spinoza puts it, "A drop rises from the ever-tossing ocean; is for a second (called seventy years) illuminated and transparent; and then the drop sinks again whence it came." The universe is not to be conceived of as arising, or becoming, or beginning to

exist; it *is*, of necessity and from eternity. Hence the existing order of things is both necessary and perfect; sin is inconceivable; darkness is but the less of light; there is no room for confession, or prayer, or forgiveness.

According to the Apostle John, on the other hand, the universe "*became;*" its things were "*made;*" it is not necessary and eternal—the Word was before it and called it into existence; light and darkness are not harmonious manifestations of the One Eternal Substance, but are in conflict; God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all; He is to be conceived of personally, as the Father of the Only-begotten Son and of as many as received Him.*

In due time The Word—who had been operating in history from the beginning—was manifested humanly in Jesus of Nazareth, so that men heard Him, saw Him, looked upon Him with their eyes, and their hands handled Him. The manifestation was made in the village-home, in the carpenter's workshop, in the little circle of Nazareth, as truly as when He raised Lazarus from the dead, or for our offences yielded Himself to the cross.

It was no mere outward and temporal conjunction. Godhead and manhood were bound into one person,† indissolubly and eternally, in the Only-begotten. It was not a mere phantom-appearance, as if an angel should become visible to the eye in human form, (as angels did in the Old Testament;) it was not Deity wearing a robe or veil of flesh, but having no human heart within: it was a true Incarnation, so that, being still The Word, He was truly,

---

* "I have long thought that without an eternal *Logos* you must have an eternal *Cosmos;* and I therefore suspect that *a mono-personal Theism is impotent against the Pantheist.*"—*Colloquia Peripatetica:* Dr. John Duncan.

† Not "*blended.*" To use such a word is an attempt, so far, to explain: and every *explanation* of this union has a seed of error in it—of necessity.

fully, sinlessly human, as verily human as we ourselves. He became one with us; bore our infirmities; stood on our level. He is the fullest answer to the question—*What is man?* as He is also the fullest answer, the only "apprehendible" answer to the question—*What is God?*

The Absolute and Eternal One had revealed Himself in part otherwise; in the constitution and order of the universe, in the great laws which rule it, in the mind and moral nature of man, and in the course of history. But the supreme revelation is in the incarnate Word. "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Spinoza has said, somewhat superciliously, "If a triangle were gifted with powers of thought and speech, it would maintain that God is eminently triangular; as would a circle, similarly endowed, declare that He is eminently circular; and so of each individual thing."

This however is but to say that God's highest revelation of Himself to any being must be through that being's own nature. So it is in this case: God manifests Himself to man through man's own nature. A visible human life becomes the medium of showing forth the Divine and eternal life. A human face shines with the very brightness of the Godhead's glory. No man sees, knows, understands God, except as he sees, knows, understands Christ Jesus. Whosoever sees, knows, understands Christ Jesus, sees, knows, and understands the Eternal Father—truly, though not fully; for the infinite "ALL" of God cannot possibly be embraced within human limitations. Wheresoever faith in the Son vacillates, the image of the Father begins to fade away; indeed, there is nothing between the world and Pantheism but Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John is the telling forth of this manifestation by one who saw it on its glorious side; even as he writes,—"We beheld His glory, the glory as of

the Only-begotten of the Father." The *mystery* of the Incarnation is not cleared away,—indeed, it is rather intensified than abated; but the *fact* is placed beyond debate.

The sphere within which the manifestation took place was "the world." In John's speech, "the world" is not the mere globe of earth on which we have our dwelling, and which gives us our graves, but the whole human region as it is alienated from God. We all belong to it by birth. In forms and ways and thoughts it is constantly changing, but coming no nearer to God. John conceives of it as dominated by sin. To master his conception we must apprehend the meaning of that word "*Sin.*" He who fails to do so, and who confines his attention to outward acts, is as a physician whose diagnosis extends only to the running sore, while he takes no account of the corruption of the blood.

John does not *define*, but simply *uses* the word; unless indeed we take as definition, "Sin is the transgression of law." We cannot learn its meaning from a dictionary; we only learn it when we are brought consciously into the presence of Him who is Light and Love. We learn it most deeply as we grow in the life of God. No man knows—no man *can* know—how bad badness is till he has learned in a measure how good goodness is.

Sin is no necessity of our creature-finiteness; it is not man coming to a consciousness of his moral freedom; it is not the unripe apple that awaits more sun; it is not the shadow of good, but the antagonist of it. It is not man going against his own conscience, which is the *regula regulata* and not the *regula regulans*. It is the creature-will revolting against the Creator-will. The eye that sees a world in a grain of sand, or a heaven in a wild flower, will see a hell in the slightest act that means *No* to God.

Parables revealing its nature are met on every hand. A mother says to her child playing on the floor beneath her smiles and loving glances, *Bring me the pin that lies over there.* The child pays no attention. By-and-by the mother repeats her word, and the child looks up into the mother's face and answers, *No.* What do men say of such a thing? Do they smile and call it a trifle, because it is only the lifting or not lifting of a pin that is in question? Do they not rather say?—*It is the child-will revolting against the mother-will.* And viewed thus, does not the act of refusal swell out into dimensions all but immeasurable? So with man's lightest *No* to God: so—with this difference, that the mother may "provoke" her child to disobedience, or may foolishly issue her orders when the child's attention is absorbed otherwise. Taken in its hidden, unconfessed, far-back intent, man's *No* involves not the mere unthroning of God, but Deicide itself. I do not forget, in saying this, how bad surroundings, mis-education, the influence of poverty, and so forth, may be a dead weight on the will. God knows all about this, and will judge righteously. But the thing to note is, that all sin carries in the heart of it a *No* to God, and means *Let Him not be!*

Now in John's view "the world" is in sin. Its sinful condition is variously represented. It is in darkness; it knows not God; it finds His commandments grievous; it lies in wickedness; it is in death,—not merely exposed to it as a penalty, but in it as a condition. The "things" of it are such as these,—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

Dark and awful as this is, there is something darker and more awful still. Lying behind the "seen" is a realm of evil unperceived by any of our senses, with a personal head—the devil, the slanderer, who misrepresents God to men, who creates suspicions and false beliefs in their minds, and fans

hatred in their hearts, and who is a liar and murderer from the beginning.* (John viii. 44.)

It is indeed a hard thing in many quarters to admit the existence of such a being. It appears to involve some gross superstition which the nineteenth century cannot tolerate. It appears even to be a libel on God that He should allow such a being room and foothold in His universe. So, the devil is resolved into our own dark shadow, or the spectre conjured up by our own guilt, or a bold orientalism for "moral evil." But is it more difficult to believe in a bad *Spirit* than in a bad *man*? Is it more difficult to believe in evil influences issuing from a spiritual world, than to believe in such influences issuing from the material and visible world? The question whether there are human and other created spirits really opens up the question—or at all events, is inextricably bound up with it—whether there is a Great Spirit, who is the *Father of spirits*.

John's doctrine is unmistakable. The dark form of this Evil Being stands distinctly out as a power working against God and goodness. The world of men has fallen under his baleful will, in its every province and family. He is more than our antecedent in evil; he is tempter, and seducer, and tyrant. Man's sin is his own; he is fully responsible for it; he knows that quite well; yet it is a work of the devil, in some sense as real as that it is his own work.

* "*From the beginning.*" The expression is radically different from that which is used respecting the Word, that He was "*in* the beginning." There is no approach to an original dualism of good and evil in John. The devil appears as the first intelligence that sinned. He was not created as he is; he "abode not in the truth." The dark mystery of the origin of moral evil lies behind, with no light thrown on it, probably insoluble to man. The very *continuance* of evil in a universe presided over by a Being infinite in holiness, love, and power, baffles speculative thought. Why did He not nip evil in the bud? Why does he not stamp it out? Daniel Defoe makes his savage ask, Why does God not kill the devil? Wise men are silent.

Only, the operations of the Tempter and those of our own hearts are so interwoven, being carried on simultaneously and within the same dimly-lighted chamber, that disentanglement is impossible—except for God.

This connection of man's sin with the devil must be studied profoundly by those who would understand John's doctrine. I am satisfied that unless we accept what he says so plainly and fully, we shall be caught in the meshes of fatalism, saying of our sin, *I could not help it; I was born for it; and the light that led astray was light from heaven;* or we shall be driven to deny that there is any essential and eternal distinction between good and evil at all.

Sin, having this twofold origin, is to be conceived of as "lawlessness," and therefore in antagonism to the revealed Will of God; as "a lie," and therefore in antagonism to Truth; as "darkness," and therefore in antagonism to Light; as "hatred," and therefore in antagonism to Love; as "death," and therefore in antagonism to Life. This manifold antagonism is set forth in some of its aspects in John's Gospel; in other of its aspects in his Epistles; and in other aspects still, in his Book of Revelation. He silently takes for granted throughout, that (however intolerable it may be to human pride) there is no possibility of self-help for the world; man cannot free himself by his own power, even if he would, or be his own saviour: apart from Christ, he abideth in death. This is the sphere of the manifestation of the Son of God—a sphere wherein evil seemed to be victorious.

The "world" of John's day we know, as to its actual condition, from other sources. Let any one turn over the pages of Tacitus, Juvenal, Martial, or Persius, with their often-unconscious disclosures of prevailing licentiousness and cruelty; and what he learns will put "colour" into

John's outlines: nay, one dare not say "*turn over their pages*," for some of them can scarcely be read without hurt by the saintliest living. The same "world"—at heart—we still find in the present century, under modern conditions. It has grown in wealth. It has become civilized and refined. Law has become a mightier thing. The glory of science was never half so radiant. But, looking close in, we still find the old facts—a dislike of God and love of sin, pride and self-sufficiency, a godless and selfish use of things, men "hating one another," selfishness fighting selfishness—an infinite mass of misery.

Look beyond the borders of comfort and respectability, and think of what exists to-day round about us. Think of the unblest poverty that is growing side by side with enormous wealth and luxury, associated in many cases with vice and crime, crushing the spirit in ways that comfortable people cannot understand, and frequently aggravated by the temper in which it is borne, and by added evils which do not properly belong to it. Think of the ignorance that has grown to such proportions under the very shadow of our schools and churches. Think of the savagery that exists among us, as hideous in feature as in any country that we send missionaries to. Think of the haunts of vice in our midst, with their open doors—hunger, and brutalism, and drunkenness, and uncleanness, and lust, going in and out. Think of those abysses of society in which honesty, purity, and truth, seem all but impossibilities. Think of the mighty multitude of sufferers, lying on beds of down or writhing on straw, through "nights that weep and wail," with no expectation of joy in the morning. Think of the death-beds, mournful beyond all expression, where wasted lives are dying out, and defiled souls are passing into the awful presence of infinite Purity and Righteousness. I do not forget that there are other things in the world besides

these. But *these exist.* And this is the sphere in which the continued action of the Son of God proceeds.

It is not, however, the misery and degradation that we must think about, but the *sin*, which may exist (and *does*), in association with birth, culture, refined and gentle manners, all that is graceful and charming humanly, and yet to the holy God is "*that abominable thing which I hate.*"

The manifestation of the Eternal Word in the world took place under conditions of outward lowliness that were an affront to human pride. Jesus was "the carpenter's son," and "the carpenter" himself. His chosen companions were fishermen and the like. His life was one of poverty. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; *He* had not where to lay His head. And finally He was put to death on a cross as a malefactor. Such were the outward conditions of the case—the very reverse of what men would have devised.

The character of the manifestation is variously represented, inasmuch as no single representation can convey the full truth. Historically, the manifestation is set forth by John in his Gospel; theologically, in his Epistles; prophetically—as to its full results and issues—in the Apocalypse. The words employed in telling of the manifestation are exceedingly simple; the meaning of them grows and grows upon us as our life deepens. The process that goes on in Christian experience is the same that goes on every morning, when the shining light shineth more and more unto the perfect day. So with every word that tells of the Son of God.

He is manifested as the Eternal Life in a world of death. He is manifested as the True Light in a world of darkness. He is manifested as the Messenger and Interpreter of God in a world that was either ignorant of Him, or that believed falsehoods and lies respecting Him; the message being summed up in the two kindred expres-

sions, which tell what He is yesterday, and to-day, and for ever—*God is Light*, and *God is Love*.

We are not to take these two expressions as making up the truth between them. Each is complete in itself, and, rightly understood, can stand alone. Nay, each word, profoundly understood, carries the other in it. God is Light and Love—Light, not merely as clear intelligence, but as holiness; Love, not merely as tender affection, but as the purpose of creating goodness; Light without any mingling of darkness; Love revealing itself in grace and salvation; Light and Love, the sum of moral perfections. The theology which misses out either word is fatally defective—indeed, false—and cannot but have evil fruits.

He is manifested as the sinless Lamb, who taketh away the sin of the world. He did not come merely to lay down the Divine Law afresh, nor to issue a fresh summons to obedience; He was manifested to take away our sin. He is Saviour; Propitiation and Advocate; Destroyer of the works of the devil; Giver of eternal life; Channel of the infinite and everlasting good which the Father means for us; Sender of the Comforter; Seed that falls into the ground and dies, that it may not abide alone, but may bring forth much fruit. Cain hated his brother, and slew him; Christ loved His enemies, and died for them. It was not a mere pouring forth of life to prove love; it was a pouring of it forth to accomplish saving ends,—just as Paul tells of "redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." His blood "cleanseth from all sin." He "loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."

Thus are we enabled to lay our sin bare before God, and to say, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and

done this evil in Thy sight." Thus are we delivered from the terrible consciousness of guilt. Thus are we taught to sing,

> "Chief of sinners though I be,
> Jesus shed His blood for me;
> Died that I might live on high,
> Lived that I might never die.
> As the branch is in the vine,
> I am His, and He is mine."

Thus are we preserved from sinning. Thus are we strengthened and inclined to keep His commandments, and to do the things that are pleasing in His sight. Thus do we become the captives of His grace. His redemption is not a mere breaking of bonds in which we were enthralled. It is not as when one comes upon a wild animal caught in a snare, and undoes the snare, and lets the panting, struggling thing return to its wild liberty again; it is rather as if one not only delivered it from the snare, but likewise attached it to himself, and tamed it to his will, so that it becomes his own. Thus, once more, are we upheld in the sanctifying assurance that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Among all the trophies of the devil is no soul that has been (so to speak) wrenched out of the grasp of Christ, and dragged down to perdition. His name is *Saviour*; and He proves it by saving. His saving energy still continues after His ascension, even as it preceded His incarnation. There is no break or interruption. "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

Necessarily and as a matter of course we meet the supernatural in this manifestation. If the supernatural could be eliminated, I for one would surrender my faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and would accept the creed, "*Physical science the only true religion, and obedience to physical law the only sound morality.*"

Having completed the manifestation on earth and taken His place in the heavens, He sends forth His Spirit to operate within the human sphere. This Spirit is the Comforter, that is, the Paraclete or Advocate. The name marks personality as real as that of Christ Himself. He is charged with Christ's interests. He is "the Spirit of truth," "the Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of God." His operations are manifold; He "teaches," "brings all things to remembrance," "bears witness," "guides into all the truth," "glorifies" Christ, "receives" and "shows" the things of Christ, "convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." This ministry of the Spirit is to be regarded as really comprehended within the scope of the manifestation of the Word. It is through the Spirit that His power is exerted in human hearts and lives. Hence in the religion of Jesus we find not merely a higher and more spiritual morality, but the revelation of means by which that morality may be attained.*

The manifestation of the Word brings in a "judgment," that is to say, a distinguishing, a separating, so that men take sides either *with* God or *against* Him. "For judgment am I come into the world"; for separating men into two classes—the children of light, truth, love, God—and the children of darkness, falsehood, hate, the devil.

This action pertains not alone to His ministry on earth, but likewise to the present and the future, through the perpetual energy of His Spirit. Here are so many human beings related to one another not merely by their common share of Adam's blood, but in other special and intimate ways. Christ goes in among them, and at once there is a taking of sides, an arraying of themselves under different

---

* See John xiv.—xvi.

banners. There is not merely the gathering out of some to be on the Lord's side, the rest remaining as they were; there is a quickening of hostility as well as a subduing of hearts. In this world men do not indeed always range themselves outwardly and visibly under their proper colours; there is self-deception, false profession, the smile of deceit, the traitor's kiss. John recognizes this when he says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." None the less real is the division, that it cannot be perfectly discerned by the eye of man, but only by the Heart-Searcher.

The line that divides the two classes is drawn by the Apostle with the utmost distinctness and firmness. It is the line that divides obeying from not obeying, sinning from not sinning, loving from not loving. The man who lives the old evil life is not of God. "He that saith, *I know Him*, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth"—that being the account of his life—"seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." There must be no tampering with this principle; there must be no saying about a man who is living a life of sin, "*He is a good man; the root of the matter is in him; he is a child of God.*" "Let no man deceive you: he that *doeth righteousness* is righteous; he that *committeth sin* is of the devil:"—in this very thing "the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." In whatever way these words may be explained, there must be no putting of darkness for light or evil for good; we

must hold firmly by this, that the devil's children are known by their sinning, and God's by their not sinning.

Shall we say, then, that sin wrought by a child of God —(say *fraud* or *drunkenness*)—is not sin *in him*? On the contrary: if ever sin is vile, it is doubly vile in a child of God. Shall we affirm that the child of God, as a matter of fact, never gives way to what is wrong? This were out of consistency with such words as these, "*If we confess our sins*," the "*we*" being those who profess to have entered into Divine fellowship. It were out of consistency likewise with observation. I do not speak of personal consciousness, because men play such tricks with themselves. I have known a man who said—no doubt honestly—that he was not conscious of having sinned for five years; but the sad thing was that, while he saw no sin in himself, his neighbours did. "If we say that we have no sin"—(the "*we*" being still the same)—"we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" we do not merely speak an untruth in this particular matter, but the truth is not in us at all. Such words as these are not to be toned down and accommodated to suit any man's life or any man's theory.

What then does John affirm? This threefold fact, *at least*. Whatever sin may exist, while traceable to the "I," is not the deed of the new nature, but of "the flesh"*— which is not utterly dead. The new nature is a "Divine nature;" no evil thought, or word, or deed, can have its source there. To refer such thoughts, words, or deeds to such a source, would be a contradiction of the deep principle, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Evil cannot be the child of good. Next, while traceable to the "I," it is not entered against the believer as a charge to be settled at the

* I use the word here in Paul's sense, as opposed to "the spirit."

Judgment Day. He "confesses" it, and is forgiven. And lastly, as a matter of fact, the child of God does not practise sin. He does not fall back into the old, bad life, out of which he has escaped by regeneration, for His seed remaineth in him. It is one thing to be overtaken in a fault: it is a very different thing—different as hell is from heaven—to live in it. The life of the child of God, conscious of his standing of grace, is a life of holiness. He consents to the rule of God. As to the incursions of sin into his life, he is warranted to pray, *Avenge me of mine adversary.*

It is in faith or unbelief in the Son of God that the distinction between the two classes is fundamentally exhibited.

Unbelief is no mere passive condition of mind—the mere negation or absence of belief—but intensely active. It is the heart's *No* to the truth and grace of God, as faith is the heart's *Yea.* In rejecting Christ, unbelief rejects God Himself; will not know Him as He is; refuses to leave the soul's interests in His hands; dismisses Him afar off into a vague "heaven," or far back into "the beginning;" turns Him into a grand Personification of nature; or makes Him an eternal activity—the sum of the natural forces of the universe—not a holy and loving Will.

Christian faith, on the other hand, is the unrebelling acceptance of the revealed truth and will of God unto salvation. It carries in it potentially all the sublimities of holiness. No deeper, more compressed, or more vital account is it possible to give of the object of it than that which John gives—"*that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.*" At first sight, this looks a poor dry husk, scarcely worth picking up. In reality everything Christian is involved in it—all the truth and all the power of the Gospel, yea, and all its blessedness; just as some of the sublimest truths of astronomy may be wrapt up in a quiet-looking

phrase. Whosoever has faith in that pregnant declaration surrenders and resigns himself to the Redeemer, and enters into eternal communion with Him.

Ere the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil exhibits itself in life and action, it exhibits itself to the eye of God and to men's own consciousness in faith or unbelief. Here is the living root of heaven or hell. Every man's attitude toward God and goodness is expressed in his attitude toward Jesus Christ. No one can study John's writings without seeing that he is as clear as the Apostle Paul in his forthsetting of the place occupied by faith; that he exalts it as highly; and that he brings it into the same connection with Christian love, hope, joy, meekness, strength, patience, victory.

The unbelieving are represented as "under condemnation," "condemned already" with this condemnation—"that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They "have not life." They "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on them." They are ripening for judgment. And in the awful Hereafter, "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." May God in His mercy grant that no reader may ever know what these words mean.

Those who believe in the Son of God are "born of God," "overcome the world" and "the Wicked One," and "have eternal life" as a present possession—not in consequence of an arbitrary award, but as a natural and vital issue. This new condition is in contrast at every point to the old condition. They are children of God, not merely as creatures—"*For we are also His offspring*"; nor merely, as it might be, by an act of adoption; but by a new birth-

relationship.* Not merely are they owned as children by God, but the fact of sonship is realized in their own consciousness. "*We know it*," is the reiterated word; and various marks are named by which they know it.

Not only so; but all that belongs to sonship is assured to them. Their sins are forgiven for His name's sake. They are enabled, in the presence of an evil world, to keep God's commandments, which are all involved in the one old, yet ever-new commandment, which bids us love even as Christ loved us. They have fellowship—common sharing, partnership, communion and participation—with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; the fellowship limited only by the finiteness of our human nature. They have an Unction from the Holy One, and know all things. The sonship indeed is not yet manifested; but in the day of its manifestation they shall be like *Him*, seeing Him as He is. He is the perfect ideal of all the sons; "as He is, so are we in this world;" His standing, our standing; the good pleasure of the Father toward Him embracing us;

---

* There is a theology—I hope not growing—which gives the "relationship" in the unqualified New Testament sense, without the "birth." Milton makes the devil say:

> "The Son of God I also am, or was;
> And if I was, I am; relation stands:
> All men are sons of God."

I think I have met this very reasoning in prose—only not put in the devil's mouth. If believers are but as Adam was—if *creaturehood* is all that lies in John's expression "*sons of God*," then (to say the least) the expression is poorer than it looks. As to the doctrine that "*humanity was born again in the Incarnation of the Son of God*," I do not find it anywhere in John's writings, nor do I see proof of it in the world's actual condition. "*As many as receive Him*" are "sons,"—however scornfully such a doctrine may be talked out of "enlightened" and "intellectual" circles. It is a grand thing to be God's creature—the creature of *such* a God. But through His mercy I pass out of merely creaturely, into filial, relationship to Him.

His holy Personality the image (if I may use such an expression) of what the Father sees in us potentially.

To some minds this may seem an unreality. Our first thought rather is, What a difference—what a vast and mighty contrast—between what "He is" and what "we are"! He is in glory, clothed with majesty and girt about with might; we are dwellers in tabernacles of clay. He is in purity, absolute and perfect; we are sinful. He is in eternal joy, the oil of gladness poured upon Him, and made most blessed for ever; we are in a world of tears, that sometimes make our couch to swim. He is in immortal life; we are in a world of sickness and graves. As He is, we *hope* to be; we *long* to be; we would *die* to be; but it seems an unreality to say, *As He is, we are.* Yet is it even so. And one of the problems of Christian experience is to reach the consciousness of the blessed fact. Once, I remember, in looking through a painter's portfolio, which contained a number of unfinished sketches—just as they flashed up before his inner eye—one little sketch attracted and interested me specially. It was the sketch of a martyr's face. Noticing the interest which his sketch excited, he took me into another room, and showed me the picture finished and almost living to the eye; and in the finished picture I saw at once the earlier sketch. Even so—if one may reverently use the parable—Christian men and women are the unfinished sketch: but God sees the perfect Christ in each of them—the Christ to whose glorious image they shall one day be perfectly conformed; and each of them He sees in the perfect Christ.

Through the consciousness of our being in Him, a love takes possession of us which casteth out fear; and a joyful, unfaltering confidence in God is inspired within us, which exhibits itself in our prayers, and which we retain even in the Day of Judgment. Abiding in Him we have confidence,

and are not ashamed before Him at His coming. We raise no dirge-like, half-shuddering wail over

"That fearful day, that day of speechless dread."

When "that Day" is conceived of, love does not clothe the Judge with awful terrors, but thinks of Him as the gracious Saviour who died for us. As the Day approaches, love is not terrified, but lifts up its head, because redemption draweth nigh. When the Lord, the Judge, appears, love exults and triumphs: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us." When we appear in His presence—naked under His eye—love is unfearing still, knowing that no unsettled charge which we cannot meet hangs over us. "Herein is love made perfect, that we should have boldness in the Day of Judgment";—that, instead of being put to silence and covered with shame, we should lift up our countenance in His presence, and speak with the unfaltering voice of loved and loving children of God. Foretoken of all this we find abundantly in the death-beds of believing men—the nearest approach we know to the conditions of the last day. Thus believers in the Son of God form the family of God; are "brethren" in the profoundest sense of the word; are *one* in the power of love.

The culmination of that life of faith, love, and obedience which belongs to God's children, is in Prayer. No perplexing speculations on the subject of prayer are introduced in John's writings: the view presented to us is simple in the highest degree. Prayer is asking: Christian prayer is the children asking, with fearless yet reverent freedom—asking and receiving. It is one of our "home-born rights," pertaining to the filial relationship. It is not the constraining or bending of the Divine will. It grounds itself on the revelation of that will. It would have nothing but what is according to that will. Its workings, being under spiritual guidance,

harmonize with the laws of the spiritual realm, "the invisible kingdom of love." It is implied by John—what is so clearly stated by Paul—that it is the result of spiritual operation within our breast. A father, trying to teach his children to pray, tells them to whom they are to speak and in what name; and then he utters words which his children repeat after him. He can put words into his children's mouths, but cannot put corresponding desires into his children's hearts. This is what the Holy Spirit does with the children of God; He kindles desires in their hearts—such as it will glorify God to grant, and bless them to receive. And here is the crowning blessing of sonship—that our will falls in with the Will of God as having entire confidence in it, and our life becomes unbroken asking and receiving.*

The conception that we obtain from John of "the Church" † is very profound, but very unecclesiastical. The *root* of the conception is the fellowship of the Father and the Son—"as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee"—"Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Into this fellowship the Apostles entered: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." And they gave forth their testimony that others might be joined to them—"that ye also may have fellowship (or common sharing) with us." And all who become sharers in the fellowship are bound together in one by that prayer which ends in these words, "*that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them—and I in them.*" Their oneness

---

* "It is not the gilded paper and good writing of a petition that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it: and to the King that discerns the heart, heart-sense is the sense of all, and that which He alone regards; He listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other excellence in prayer is but the outside and fashion of it: that is the life of it."—*Leighton.*

† The ordinary word for "church" is not used by John except to mark some separate, visible society.

is "as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee;" and hence could never be brought about by any fusion of "denominations." This is the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. And in this Church the Holy Spirit dwells.

Though he does not speak of Law as Paul does, equally the Apostle John asserts the supremacy of the holy Will in Christian living—clinching what he says ever and again, with the words, *This is His Commandment.* Hence he can never be made the minister of that religion of mere taste and feeling—so congenial to human nature—whose highest triumph is to ravish the worshipper into a half dreamy, half sensuous elysium, but which unstrings the moral energies, and is useless, amid the wear and tear of daily life, to make men patient and righteous and godly. There is moral nerve in his doctrine equally with loftiness of pitch.

The place which he assigns to Jesus in connection with duty is shown in the words which he reports, "If ye love Me keep My commandments." In saying so, Jesus does not speak as a mere lawgiver, having authority and right, and with power to enforce His will. The laws of states have no preface like this, *If ye love me.* Obedience is demanded whether the subjects love the lawgiver or not. These laws are grounded, or supposed to be grounded, on what is *righteous*, and are enforced by the magistrate's sword. But the Lord Jesus, in issuing His commandments, makes appeal to our love—our love to Himself personally.* He has established a claim upon our love, and if our hearts respond to that claim, then (He says) "keep My commandments." It is not then as a mere *lawgiver* that Jesus speaks to us.

Nor is it as a mere *friend.* A friend may warn, counsel,

* "Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love,
Thou maker of new morals for mankind,
The grand morality is love of Thee."

urge, remonstrate, but he does not issue "commandments." It is the glory of friendship to stand on the same level with us. But Jesus *commands.*

The relation in which He stands to us is thus altogether unique. We have analogies to it in actual life, but no perfect parallel. Here is One who has authority over us, but who does not take His stand on mere authority; who takes His stand on the claim He has established upon our hearts, and who issues His commandments to *love.* He is, as the children's hymn calls Him, "Our *Saviour-King.*"

The ethical teaching does not follow the doctrinal in separate chapters, and as a consequence; but is so interwoven with it that the one cannot be detached from the other. Being "*in* the Son of God," we are to abide in Him, drawing our very life from Him. Being children of God, we are to realize our sonship, to bear it ever in mind, to act it out in all ways, to use its privileges, to cherish its hopes. Having life, we are to live, reproducing and showing forth the life of Christ among our fellow-men. *He* is the ideal of the righteousness, and meekness, and mercifulness, and truth, and patience, and joy in God, and surrender to His will, that we are to aspire after. Being the children of light, we are to walk in the light, abiding therein continually. Supremely (everything being involved in this) we are to love—purely, self-sacrificingly, lastingly. The word "*Love*" is a summons as lofty and great as the charge, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

The type of love is the love we have ourselves received. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This is not to be the splendid exception, in some special cases, as when there is need for a Christian Thermopylæ; it is the common rule. Love gives itself, even as Christ Jesus gave Himself for us, not merely to a bitter and shameful death (over the remembrance of which we may weep and bewail

our sins), but to the manifestation of all patience, and gentleness, and grace. Faith in His love is the death of selfishness in my heart—or at least the sentence of doom.

One of the common complaints in our day, in Christian societies, is this, "*There is no love among us.*" Sometimes the complaint is uttered in holy sorrow. But sometimes it only means, *I am not getting my just share of love from others; the place feels cold around me.* If this is what the complaint means, the remedy is that the complainer should love till he warms up the whole neighbourhood. I am to love when I am not loved. I am to love when I am suspected. I am to love when men are trying to discover what selfish feeling moves me, or what my price is. I am to love those who do not care for my love. I am to love even when I have indignation. I am to love as the sun shines—its beams going forth on all sides without asking for an object, and "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof"; the love I show being the love of God in me.

We speak—we cannot help speaking—of "the love of God." John however conceives of the case more simply still. He does not conceive of love as something *belonging* to God, something *in* God, something that *characterizes* God; but as *what God is.* He does not speak of God *having* love; he says, "God *is* love." When I think of God, I think of love. To say, *I believe in God*, is the same thing as to say, *I believe in love.* When I know God, I know love. When I abide in God, I abide in love. When I love God, I love love. Now the love I know in knowing God, is love that lays hold of my being and communicates itself. Not as flame, shining through a window, reddens the surface of a frozen pool without warming it: but as flame seizes upon the wood it touches, and kindles it, setting it aflame—so the love of God does with me; it lays hold, flame-like, upon my heart, and kindles it into the

very ardours of God. My love is not something separate from God's, resembling it, but having no connection with it; rather it is God's love laying hold upon me, kindling me, making me in a most real sense a partaker of the Divine nature. Madame Guyon has just expressed the thought in these simple lines:—

"I love my God, but with no love of mine,
For I have none to give;
I love Thee, Lord; but all the love is Thine,
For by Thy love I live.
I am as nothing, and rejoice to be
Emptied and lost and swallowed up in Thee."

Now the very essence and sum of all duty is, that I should *love*. When I have learned to do so, then does my will learn to stand and wait for the blessed Will—like an angel continually beholding the face of God: and then too obedience is no task; but I can say, as the Lord said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." It is the peculiarity of this life of love that it may be lived in its utmost grandeur in the humblest circumstances—as it was by Him who was born in a stable and laid in a manger.

One thing I would specially note with respect to the Apostle's ethical teaching—the absence of what would stimulate self-consciousness or consciousness of being in the presence of men. Without thinking what we do, we often lead new converts into a subtle danger. We are jealous for the honour of Christ, and we wish to help Christian steadfastness; and so we say to the new convert, *Now, you must be very careful in your behaviour; and remember that the eyes of the world are upon you.* It may be well meant; but I doubt if it is in keeping with the counsel of Scripture. Would it not be better to say?—*Walk before the Lord; think supremely of His eye; and do not trouble your-*

self about the eyes of men. It seems to me that this is the spirit of the Apostle John throughout his writings.

As to the "Last Things," there are many weighty and suggestive hints in John's Epistles—as weighty and suggestive, though not so large as in Paul. There are also hints—if only mere hints—in his Gospel, such as these: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also."

In the Gospel of Matthew we find what may be called an Apocalyptic Section, consisting of two chapters, the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth; and similarly in Mark and Luke. Instead of such a section in John's Gospel, the visions of futurity are broadened out into a separate, prophetic book—the Book of Revelation—in which the fullest disclosure is made of the things that are to be hereafter. The Pierced One is to return to earth again. "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." There is no real ground for the assertion, so often and confidently made, that John believed the end of all things was to take place in his own day. He never says so. But he does most unmistakably affirm the glorious Appearing, and assures us that the Lord will lose no time. The Divine fellowship of believers is to be perfect in that day of Christ. Our present relationship is that between the

betrothed bride and the Bridegroom. At present the Church and her Lord are (in a sense) divided. There is indeed ceaseless and unbroken communion proceeding; her prayers and praises and offered love are continually ascending to the high world where He is; and His gifts and blessings and assurances of undying love are continually coming down to earth. But not till the day of Christ is the fulness of the Church's joy and bliss. His Appearing is THE HOPE.

Preceding and leading up to it there is a peculiar course of development, unfolded at large and with the utmost wealth of imagery in the book of Revelation. Within the visible society antichristianism develops itself; while the world, onward to the last, exhibits impenitence and deadly hostility against God and His Christ. Antichristianism is *really* and *at heart* "the world;" but it is "the world" assuming the Christian name, professing to believe in Christian doctrine, assembling in Christian "temples," offering the show of homage to Christ while inwardly it hates Him. It goes on from age to age—conspiracy, war, struggle, hate against the Lamb, and all device and violence to ruin His cause. "To bring Him down," a certain writer says, "from the throne to which His mistaken followers have exalted Him, *is only a work of time.*" Unbelief again and again begins to sing its pæan of victory over a conquered Christ who shall trouble the world no more. "I pray you," says Voltaire, "let me never hear that man's name again."

In vain! The "Word of God," who is called Faithful and True, the King of kings and Lord of lords, followed by the armies of heaven, is victorious; the devil is bound and shut up in the bottomless pit; the martyr souls live and reign with Christ a thousand years. At the end of that period the imprisoned foe of God and man is unloosed for

a time and returns to his old work; the final victory at length is won, and the devil is cast into the lake of fire.* The Judgment of the "great white throne" follows, in which the dead, small and great, stand before God, and are judged every man according to his works; and the eternal state is introduced, in which God is "all in all," and the words from the throne are fulfilled, "*Behold, I make all things new.*"

From this brief account of the great lines laid down in John's writings, it will be seen that in his conception the whole of Christian theology is involved in the person of Christ, the Eternal Word manifested in the flesh, and exerting His power throughout human history. It is no metaphysical castle in the air, but an edifice whose foundations are the immovable primary rocks of eternal truth. I would only add that, just as the true and the ethical are vitally connected in his writings—as faith and life are not merely allied, but *one*—so no man can be a Christian theologian who is not also living a Christian life.

---

* Symbolized by the Dead Sea lying in its horrid chasm,—the lake in which sank the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, "set forth for an example," suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

IX.

His Influence.

ON CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. THE ORIGIN AND NURTURE OF THE NEW LIFE. FAITH, LOVE, HOPE. THE EARLY AGES. THE DARK AGES. MYSTICISM. THE REFORMATION. THE PRESENT. INFLUENCE OF JOHN'S PERSONALITY. RESULTS OF STUDYING HIS WRITINGS.

IT is not possible for us to disentangle the influence of John's writings upon the life and thought of the Christian Church from that of Scripture as a whole, and to trace and measure it separately—even as we cannot trace to their separate sources the million rain-drops that descended last summer upon the earth and refreshed it when it was weary. Very distinctly however can we discern its presence, combined with countless other influences which have their origin in God and are administered by His Spirit.

Three almost distinct forms of influence I would specially note, as belonging under God, to the writings of this Apostle.

FIRST, on Christian Thought, through the special truths which he exhibits. Certain realms of truth his writings

illumine as no other portion of Scripture does; certain special truths, which "*command*" alike in theology and life, he has brought into view almost like a creator. Were his writings lost, or expunged from the New Testament, the truth as it is in Jesus would of course remain essentially the same; but, so far as concerns us, it would be thrown into obscurity; we should feel as if half the light had been withdrawn from our atmosphere; and some of the greatest questions pertaining to life and godliness we should have to deal with anew, from the very foundations.

I refer specially to those truths which cluster round the pre-existence and Godhead of our Reedemer, His Incarnation, the dwelling of God in us and of us in Him, and the personality and grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. I will not say that the essence, but certainly the direction and volume and force, of our Christian thought—and the character of our Christian worship—would have been very different from what they are, had the writings of John not existed.* And on certain vital questions, respecting which the Church of Christ can now give forth a clear and unhesitant utterance, we should perhaps have spoken timidly rather than in the tones of men who have attained to heart-assurance.

It is certainly a unique fact that a fisherman, simply relating what he saw and heard, in terms that a child may understand, should have brought the supremest claims of Jesus of Nazareth into view—beyond what even the imperial Paul has done—so as to compel the most profound and philosophic thinkers of every age to meet the

* Bunsen says strongly: "If the Gospel of John is not the historical account of an eye-witness, but a myth, then there is no historic Christ; and without an historic Christ, all Church-Christian faith is at an end; all Christian confession is hypocrisy or illusion; all Christian worship mummery; and the Reformation a crime or a madness."

problem, and so as to induce men, to whom sin and helplessness are realities and not names, to commit themselves into His hands for both worlds, believing them to be the hands of grace and almightiness.

A SECOND form of influence is seen in what may be called the Apostle's Christian Philosophy. He apprehends the truths of the Gospel, builds them together, and presents them to our minds in a way of his own, quite different from the way of James or Peter or Paul. Two things we observe in him: first, the revelation of God in Christ has shone with the intensest and purest brightness before his soul, and he has gazed upon it (as one fascinated)—not merely until he has penetrated it—but until *it* has penetrated *him;* and second, he "testifies" or "shows" with the artlessness of a child what he has thus seen and known. The Western mind, with its logical bent and dialectic tendencies, does not enter very readily or very sympathetically into his way. The wise and prudent think him childish; some even profess to find in him only the aridity of metaphysics, and the darkness of abstract dogmas, in weary repetition. Now and again a stray thinker follows him—perhaps earning for himself the name of "mystic" or even of "heretic"; but the majority go a separate path.

Here is a remarkable *glint* of the inner life of a very remarkable and (in some respects) John-like man.* After telling of his conversion, he says: "Next day, as I sat down to study, and took my pen in hand, I became suddenly the passive recipient of all the truths which I had heard and been taught in my childhood. I sat there unmoving for hours, and they *came and preached themselves to me.* There was now no investigation such as I had

* The late Dr. John Duncan, Professor of Oriental Languages, Edinburgh.

desired, but presentation of the truth to me passive. And I felt, sitting there, as if in that hour I had got matter for sermons for a life-time. Now the temptation to daily sin was gone. I had not even to fight with it. And I was in an almost infantile state of mind; so that when I mislaid a paper in my study, I would kneel down and pray to find it, and then go and seek for it." I refer to the life throughout as one of the rare illustrations of the influence of the Apostle John in the direction I am now pointing out.

The thoughts which the Apostle presents are to be seen, with the eyes of the heart, in the light of the Spirit of God, rather than reasoned about; and the links that bind them together into a succession lie deep out of common sight. But though his philosophy, if I may call it so, has not been extensively followed, it has, nevertheless, had a distinct influence in at least two directions: it has tended to prevent the logician from tyrannizing over the seer, and turning Christian teaching into the mere exposition of a system; and thousands and tens of thousands of lowly people have learnt from it, in a practical way, that we see with the heart, and that for spiritual vision the heart must be purified and brought under the power of love.*

A THIRD form of influence is seen in connection with the origination and nurture of the New Life.

I would place in the very forefront the influence which his writings have had, under God, in leading souls into the peace of believing, and in enkindling love toward the Lord Jesus. The Gospel is sometimes set forth, even by well-meaning men, in a threatening way, as if one should

---

* "It is most important in these days that all should be convinced that the pure love of truth cannot be severed from the love of God, nor the perfect knowledge of truth from the knowledge of God; and that the Spirit of God alone can purge our intellectual eye from the manifold films which disguise and distort all objects, and prevent its seeing them."

offer a gift to another, presenting a loaded and capped revolver at his head to compel acceptance of it. How far different is John's way! While there is no holding back of that which is dread—no extenuating of the consequences of unbelief—the Saviour is exhibited in infinite attractiveness and grace, as well as Divinest majesty, answering to His word, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

I believe the writings of this Apostle have been blotted by more penitents' tears, and have won more hearts for the Redeemer, than all the rest put together. Among the "gracious words" that are set as thick as stars in the firmament of Scripture, there are none that shine with a clearer lustre than those which we find in John. Take the following by way of example: "Behold the Lamb of God!" "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out;" "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life;" "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;" "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." These texts are all the more wonderful when viewed in their connection. If we were asked to name a verse that might be called the very pole-star of faith, what would it be but this?—"God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How many souls have entered into the peace of believing through means of this one verse God only knows; and again, how often dying lips have whispered it and fading eyes have brightened to hear it spoken.

One example may represent a thousand. Jonas Justus, wiping the cold sweat from the forehead of the dying Luther, heard him praying and committing his soul with

great confidence into the hands of the Heavenly Father; and then, as if he were grasping hard after the ground of such certain hope, he repeated aloud this passage (in Latin, as he had learned it when a child), "Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret, ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat, sed habeat vitam æternam." "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Equally precious are these writings in connection with the *nurture* of the new life.

Simple and childlike hearts that have newly entered into the joy of salvation, ignorant of scientific theology, but hungering and thirsting for God, turn to them with never-failing desire, and find in them green pastures and living waters. To a large extent it is the same with those who have reached the most advanced stages of Christian experience, whose spiritual nature has become deepened and expanded by the manifold teachings of God. Here the simplicity of youth and the ripest and holiest wisdom of age agree. I have taken pains to inquire of many belonging to both classes how they have been guided in their reading, and what they have found most fruitful of spiritual blessing and delight; and almost every answer has included—at least—the Gospel of John, often named in the tone of personal affection, as men name a dear friend. And I have often thought that those whom the Lord leads hither, and teaches out of this part of His Word, have a special simplicity and depth of character, and a holy insight, that others do not attain to. I have thought also that they learn more of a personal love to Jesus, like that of the bride to the bridegroom—with fullest abnegation of self and devotion to His will; and that their lives come to move as if set to the cadence of an unearthly, mystic melody. While other

saints believe and love and serve, *they* lose themselves in Him, finding Him the chiefest among ten thousands and the altogether lovely—just as in that "love-song"—

"In darkest shades, if He appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And He my rising sun.

"The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss,
While Jesus shows His heart is mine,
And tells me I am His.

"My soul would leave this heavy clay
At that transporting word;
Run up with joy the shining way
To embrace my dearest Lord."

Here is the secret of self-consecration: in our being "possessed" by the love of Christ; and feeling—*He* loves *me* more than I love Him. Possessed by this love, I yield myself wholly and joyfully to Him. My hand, my foot, my eye, my ear, my tongue, my understanding, my heart—all that is within me—belong to the Lord, and are to be used according to His loving and holy will. My hand is His, redeemed by Him, sacred to Him, and cannot do unholy work; my foot is His, and cannot go on unholy errands; my ear is His, and cannot listen to unholy words; my eye is His, and cannot look upon unholy deeds; my tongue is His, and cannot utter unholy speeches; my mind is His, and cannot think unholy thoughts; my heart is His, and cannot cherish unholy feelings and desires; my whole being is His, redeemed by Him, sacred to Him, and is surrendered to His will.

Not the worse, but the better, will the work of the present life be done that we are attaining to this condition more fully. Not the worse, but the better—because, for the eye of the Lord—shall we be able to buy and sell, to plan

and construct, to sow and reap, to subdue the earth and have dominion over it, not only in outward ways, but in its subtlest and most hidden forces. The most daring scientific investigator will not feel himself hampered in his inquiries. He need not be the less a true man of science because he is a true Christian. Not the worse, but the better, shall we deal with questions of public economy, social order and morality, poverty, health, education, and whatsoever else belongs to us by God's appointing as members of an earthly commonwealth. We shall be better fathers and mothers, better sons and daughters, better friends, better neighbours, better masters, better servants, fulfilling better the duties of all our relationships.

So far from being *un*practical, there is nothing *more* practical—for all kinds of true work—than this letting the love of Christ get in and about the roots of our being. In a window this summer there was a flower-pot, containing a plant whose use it was to be odorous and beautiful. The leaves were just beginning to curl up. I poured a cupful of water around the roots; and a child, looking on, asked, *What good will that do? Why did you not rather pour the water on the leaves?* It was a child that asked—and I answered in the best way I could, that when God would bring beauty, and fragrance, and healthfulness into our lives He waters us at the root. And His rain does good by going down *there*.

Besides faith and love, there is the influence which the Apostle, as the New Testament prophet, has exerted upon Christian hope. More largely than any other New Testament writer, he deals with "the things which shall be hereafter," inspiring the believer to wait patiently and courageously upon God.

The sphere thus filled is very wide. In God's dealings of grace, throughout history, there has ever been a call

addressed to the patience of hope: "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Thus, when God gave promise to Abraham, He called him to patient waiting; and, again and again, while he waited on, the promise seemed destined to fail. That is a type of God's way. During the course of these eighteen centuries it has seemed again and again as if it were all over for Jesus Christ and His cause; as if the word, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession," were coming to nought; as if either He would not ask, or God could not give; and as if the prediction, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied," must fail. Most powerful under God has John's influence been, in the presence of such a condition of things, through the Book of Revelation—a book which has not merely had a splendid and mighty fascination for the imagination, but has kept alive a glorious Hope in the gloomiest and most fearful times. Even when God's ways have become unintelligible to His people, and despairing thoughts in dark and dread array have invaded their souls, there has come in through the ministry of this book a calm and mighty *Fear not*, as if One spake to them not from the far-off heavens, but close at hand, adding the promise (*thrice*, lest it should be overlooked), "Surely I come quickly."*

For no book of Scripture has there been a profounder and more imperious need. Men may play with it in days

* "It has given a foretaste of heaven, and elevated the soul with all the charms of permitted inspiration. Every Christian poet has drawn from this source; the best psalms of the middle ages, as used in the Church, are adorned with flowers from the Apocalypse. Subsequently to this period, we may trace its hallowed sounds through Dante; Petrarch; Milton; and Petersen, whose 'Songs of Zion' are an echo of the Revelation."—*Herder*.

of peaceful ease ; but looking back over the past, I do not know what could have been done—how the woes and miseries of ages could have been borne—without it. Let any one read for example the pages of Tacitus, the contemporary of John, in which the utter wretchedness of society is described, and the sufferings which the Christians had to endure—just answering to these words, "the fiery trial which is to try you" ; and then, with the facts in view, let him consider how terrible must have been the strain put upon faith and patience.

Or take such an inscription from the Catacombs, belonging to the reign of Antoninus : "Oh, sad times ; in which, amid sacred rites and prayers, even in caverns we are not safe ! What can be more wretched than such a life !"

Or take the description given by Eusebius of the sufferings of the Christians under Diocletian (with all allowance for rhetorical exaggerations), when they were scourged till the flesh came off the bones, when they were torn asunder limb from limb, when boiling oil was poured along the hollow of the naked back, when they were hung over slow fires till their very flesh was roasted.

Or take the story told by such a writer as Michelet concerning France between the thirteenth century and the fifteenth, with its inconceivable horrors and the growth of a religion of despair.

Terrible has been the temptation, again and again in the course of history, for even Christian hearts to surrender amidst accumulated woes, giving up all for lost, and unable to endure their miseries and the sight of the miseries of their fellow-men.

More than any other book of Scripture has the book of Revelation counterworked the tendencies to despair, and kept hope alive—if at times only like a wind-blown flame. In the worst times believing hearts have seen, off in the

future—victory for the Lamb, and blissful ages when "the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Precious beyond all conception has the Hope been; while the longing has grown almost to a passion, in response to Him who has promised to come quickly,—"*Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*"

Looking broadly over history, the general influence of the Apostle is very distinctly marked in the earlier centuries. I am not prepared to assert that he gave direction to the first investigations of Christian thinkers; it was perhaps natural and inevitable that Christian inquiry should take for its starting-point, as it did, the person of the Redeemer; but unquestionably his writings were of supremest worth in these investigations, and the earlier Christian centuries may be called Johannine: they bear his impress and stamp, with the utmost depth and distinctness,—not indeed in manner of thought, but certainly in the truths received.

By degrees other subjects came into the foreground of thought; and his influence was felt in a diminished measure. With Augustine—as a marked name—attention began to be powerfully directed to subjects on which Paul had spoken out more largely than John. Such words as sin, grace, predestination, free will, redemption, indicate the region now to be explored. Also, in course of time, questions shaped themselves out respecting which John said little or nothing—questions about ecclesiastical form and organization, sacraments, relations of Church and State, the supremacy of Peter, the respect due to the Virgin Mary, the power of the bishop of Rome, and so forth. It is not necessary to recal

what Church History tells of the flow of thought for many centuries—of the channels along which it flowed—of the corruptions and absurdities with which it became mingled—of the philosophies which ruled it—of the bogs in which it sometimes almost lost itself*—of the hiding of the personal Christ by the priesthood and ritual; by the mediation of the Virgin Mary, together with a host of saints; and by a theological jargon which now appears grotesque and senseless. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that for hundreds of years men found little or nothing in John's writings that seemed to be of value to them.

Down these ages however his influence is exhibited, in connection with that stream of tendencies known as MYSTICISM. As to mystic doctrines, these varied widely at different times and in different countries: theologically and practically mysticism was often in deep and dangerous error; not seldom on the verge of Pantheism. As to mystic life, it too often placed a false value on reverie and nervous excitement, and degenerated into the substitution of a morbid and fantastic saintship for loving obedience to the will of Christ:† at times associating itself with unbridled licence, at times with the sternest asceticism, that maimed and tortured the flesh, but left the root of sin untouched in the heart; while

---

* Even during the darkest of the dark ages the Divine fire was always kept burning in some hearts, and never really went out. Every generation had its remnant according to the election of grace—consisting perhaps of more thousands than we might think—who did not bow the knee to Baal. I am not sure that we are so much in advance of past ages, in point of insight into the things of God, as we believe. How much of our most intelligent talk is a "babbling in the dark!" I suspect that the so-called "dark ages" hid many "hidden ones" who were John-readers.

† Thus it was the prayer of "John of the Cross" that not a day of his life might pass in which he did not suffer something. "Take pains," he says, "to give your name an ill savour; burrow deep and deeper under heaped obloquy, and you are safe." And again: "Whatsoever you find pleasant to body or soul, abandon: whatsoever is painful, embrace."

in other cases it was the expression of holiest desire (enkindled in the heart by the Spirit of God) to walk with the crucified and risen Christ,—trust, love, gratitude, awe, devotion, being combined and blended.

Mysticism contained however an assertion, less or more distinctly uttered, that the things of God can be seen only by the spiritual man—that God reveals Himself within the secret chamber of the soul—that the activity of the intellect is less than still and silent contemplation—that the impulses of the body are to be held in check, and the inward and hidden life cherished—that the sum of holiness and bliss is the annihilation of self, or "inward death," and the conscious union of the soul to God—that thus we do truly enter into rest, enjoying (as one of them expresses it) "the most calm and peaceful liberty, being uplifted above all fear and agitation of mind concerning death or hell, or any other things which might happen to the soul either in time or eternity."* Here was a living protest against rationalism, formalism, priestcraft, and all self-striving of the creature, whether in the realm of providence or of grace, and a plea for a life of simple trust in God and acquiescence in His sovereign will.†

---

* "Christ reveals Himself with an infinite love, sweetness, and richness flowing forth from the power of the Holy Ghost, overflowing and streaming in a very flood of richness and sweetness into the heart that is waiting to receive it; and with this sweetness He not only reveals Himself to the soul, but unites Himself with her. Through this sweetness, the soul in its essence by grace flows out with power above all creatures, back into her first origin and fount. Then is the outward man obedient unto the inward man, even unto death, and liveth in constant peace in the service of God continually. That the Lord may thus come into our souls also, overthrowing and casting out all hindrances, bodily or spiritual that we may become one here on earth, and hereafter in the kingdom of heaven, may He help us evermore."—*Tauler;* 1290—1361.

† There is a sublime side to the story—told, I think, by Dr. John Brown, in his *Horæ Subsecivæ*—of the woman on her death-bed who was

In this movement, that has never been quite interrupted, the influence of this Apostle is distinctly perceptible. It is not that light has been thrown upon his writings by the mystics, but that the mystics have received an impress from his peculiar individuality. At the same time, there are profound differences apparent. Under the mystic's gaze there oftentimes lay no object whatever; oftentimes he gazed into vacuity, and mistook his own imaginings for the revelation of God. The Apostle John is not only intensely contemplative, but at the same time intensely objective; the glory he beholds is not that which is seen in a trance, but that which shines forth from the face of the Only-begotten. The mystic sat in still seclusion, with the world of sensible appearances shut out, and (gazing with closed eyes) supposed that he saw the invisible: the gaze of John, on the other hand, was fixed upon the Christ, the image of God, as actually and historically manifested. The result attained by the mystic was often vague, misty, fantastic, wild, throbbing with a false emotion; that, on the other hand, which is presented to us in the pages of John is most thoroughly sober and true.

In the time of the Reformation and onwards—as has been often remarked—PAUL assumed the paramount place as the leader of Christian thought. Taking the two mighty questions which were dealt with in Reformation times—our Freedom as against human authority, wheresoever lodged, and Justification by grace through the faith of Christ Jesus and not by human merits—his writings furnished the texts which the Reformers mainly handled, and his name, rather than John's, is the name we oftenest meet with. It may be safely affirmed that, in and since the Reformation, more

---

asked, "What would you say if, after all He has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?" "E'en as He likes," was the reply; "but if He does, *He'* ll lose mair than I' ll do."

study by far has been given to the writings of Paul than to those of John, even when the fullest allowance has been made for the larger volume of the former. We seem to feel more at home with Paul; our intellect can more easily hold its footing with him. There are signs however which appear to indicate that God is about to use the writings of John more extensively and powerfully again. The questions which are coming into prominence—or looming in the not distant future—are questions on which these writings throw special light.

For example: Men are loudly telling us (though, as I believe, without the warrant of science herself) that the "scientific spirit" cannot possibly admit the supernatural. Belief in any intromission of the supernatural in history must, they affirm, be abandoned as a superstition—an affirmation which rests on the tacit assumption that there is no realm in the universe save that which lies open to the five senses, or—which is the same thing—to the extension of the senses in scientific apparatus. The consequence is an uncomfortable sense of insecurity in many minds in reading the four Gospels—particularly the fourth; and a starting of the thought, *If Christ be not risen?* There is even at times what looks like an *apologizing* for the supernatural in the life of Christ—as if we gained something in proportion as we reduce its dimensions.

How are we to meet this denial of the supernatural in history?—a denial of it not merely as the actual, but as the possible? Not, as I believe, by argument, but by re-uttering in simplicity and fulness the testimony of those who saw, and heard, and handled, the manifested Word of Life, and who "know" that what they tell us is true; speaking to sinners and not to philosophers, and leaving God (as of old) to give testimony in *His* own way to the word of His grace. You may browbeat a man to whose heart the truth

has been revealed, and who has seen it; you may perplex him with questions; you may cover his position with ridicule; but you cannot prevent his looking up and saying, "Nevertheless I have seen and do testify." In the face of all denials of the supernatural, I believe our business is to fall back on the apostolic testimony—as delivered by John and his companions—and trust God Himself to prove it to men, and to carry it home to their minds and hearts.

Another thing I would refer to. The struggle between faith and unbelief in the present day, as in the beginning, is concentrating around THE PERSON OF THE LORD. It is clearly perceived that unless He can be successfully assailed, the battle of unbelief is lost. The numerous "Lives" of Christ published within the last thirty years are full of meaning as a sign of the times. He is "set" in our midst—as of old—"for the fall and rising of many, and for a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

In this struggle, already commenced, the writings of John are invaluable. The very hostility exhibited against him is tribute to his power. So I interpret the unsuppressed contemptuousness and scorn with which he is treated, and the fierce eagerness to put his testimony out of court or to deprive it of force. And I anticipate that as deeper and more sympathetic study is given to his writings, the Saviour whom he describes—"the Christ that is to be"—will become in all ways grander and more majestic to us. We know how the heavens have become grander and more majestic to advancing science. Every star was there in the time of the old Chaldee gazers, pursuing its silent march the same as now; but to the human eye what glory has been kindled since! Even so with "the glories of the Lamb." I know not what magnificent and blissful revelations of Himself may be included under that word which

He speaks—"*My New Name;*" but this Apostle will help us to understand. And to rise to the understanding may well prove what Bacon calls "the Sabbath of human labours."

There is also an influence still proceeding—such is God's grace—from the MAN as well as from his WRITINGS, even after the lapse of so many centuries. Truly has it been said, "The personality of John left far deeper traces of itself in the Church than that of any other of Christ's disciples. Paul laboured more abundantly than they all, but John stamped his image the most profoundly." This applies not merely to John's own age, and the ages immediately following, but also to the present.

Personally he stands forth to view as one of the noblest instances in history of Christ's transforming, all-commanding power. He could never, under any circumstances, have been an ordinary man; if hostile to Christ, he would have been not less resolute and unshrinking than Saul of Tarsus, even when he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord—though in another way. It is tribute to the power of Christ that He subdued and dominated such a nature.

A traveller, giving an account of an ancient volcano which he visited, tells of a verdurous cup-like hollow on the mountain summit, and that, where the fierce heat had once burned, lay a still, clear pool of water, looking up like an eye to the beautiful heavens above. It is an apt parable of this man. Naturally and originally volcanic, capable of profoundest passion and daring, he is new-made by grace, till in his old age he stands out in calm grandeur of character, and depth, and largeness of soul, with all the gentlenesses and graces of Christ adorning him—a man, as I image him to myself, with a face so noble that kings might do him homage, and so sweet that children would run to him for his blessing. All readers of the Evangelic narrative must

perceive what fine "keeping" there is between the picture of Jesus and that of the disciple whom He loved—and what an illustration of the words, "We, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

And so a holy and even sublime influence still comes forth from this man—because Jesus was so much to him and there was so much of Jesus in him—and enters vitally into hearts and lives, wheresoever the gospel is preached in all the world.

I am persuaded that one result, under God, of our entering more deeply and lovingly into the spirit of John, would be the attainment of a nobler type of Christianhood than prevails among us.

Temptations certainly beset us in this age to be selfish and self-indulgent—to degenerate into sentimentalists or accusers of the brethren, who earn a name for faithfulness by bitter fault-finding—to walk according to the course of the world, getting into "good society," and doing what is religiously fashionable—to forget our high calling, and the Lord's will concerning us—and to be at the mercy of circumstances and prevailing influences.

How far such temptations have been yielded to, it is not necessary to pronounce. Sorrowful complaints arise from many quarters that we fall beneath the level we ought to attain to; that there is too much bustle, and talk, and vehemence of the flesh, among us—too much faith in machinery—too much faith in "doing"—too much looking to the outward—too much self-pleasing—too much religious activity that is irreligious in its spirit, and that tends to deterioration of character—too much of that

> "restless will
> That hurries to and fro,
> Seeking for some great thing to do,
> Or secret thing to know."

Meditation does not occupy sufficient breadth of space in our lives; it is crowded out by a multitude of trifles. Many of us scarcely know what "the hidden life" means. Martha is our model—loving Jesus truly, but her time filled up with bodily service, and carefulness about many things; while we have no real sympathy—or only the slightest—with Mary sitting silently at Jesus' feet and hearing his words, or anointing Him silently with her precious ointment—or with John leaning on His breast. I wish there were more of us who knew not only how to "serve" like Martha, but also how to say from the heart—

> "Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet,
> From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low."

I say nothing whatever against "the practical," truly so called; nothing against work, and labour, and patience, and cross-bearing, and the enduring of hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; nothing that would give comfort to indolence. There is room and need for the most earnest efforts that we can put forth. But—for sustained and earnest Christian effort—do we not pressingly need men and women who lead the inner life—who have renounced self—who live away from the sounds of human applause or blame—who never think whether "the world is laughing at us" or not—who dispose of all questions about "will" by proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God—who love and use earthly things for heavenly ends—who, when they come forth among men, are as if they came forth from the presence-chamber of the Holy One—and whose hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord?

These are our saints and our mighty ones, though the religious world (none the less "world" that it is "religious") knows them not, or surveys them with scorn, fine or rude. Did our fellowship consist of such men and women, how new the condition of matters would become! We should

stand aloof from religious rhetoric, from outward noise and the "hoarse disputes" of the age,* from the merely intellectual and æsthetic, from that dread religious sensuousness which lays the soul open to the worst influences of hell, just as she imagines herself rapt into the borders of Paradise; and our lives would be a reproducing of the life of Christ. We should learn to have patience with God in His working out of His mighty purposes, and to accept His law of growth.

Every one of our churches would then be a meet home for the new life; a place of freedom, brotherly confidence, joy, finest and truest concords both of heart and intellect; an earthly type of the Father's house. People would not talk hesitatingly about *the duty* of joining the Church, but would regard it as a high privilege to be admitted. We should gather in young converts among us, in the ardour of their first love, and not chill it. We should have place for all the stages of growth, for the winningness of Christian childhood, the enthusiasm of youth, the strength of manhood, the rich experiences of age. We should reconcile all classes, thinker and worker, reasoner and seer, impulsive and cautious, and whatever other classes may be named, melting them into one brotherhood. We should have room for all varieties of Christian character and life, according to the diverse yet harmonious operation of the Spirit of God, with space and sunlight and air for each to grow. We should provide defence for our members, not only against the grosser forms of evil, but against those also which are more subtle, such as lukewarmness or covetousness. We should find ourselves in sympathy with all goodness that

* "Had I a strong voice, as it is the weakest alive, yea, could I lift it up as a trumpet, I would sound a retreat from our unnatural contentions and irreligious strivings for religion."—*Leighton.*

exists around us, and with all good men in whom Christ, the Truth, dwells.

Our spiritual power would be multiplied an hundredfold. Into the great, varied life of men around us, with its scheming and toiling; its philosophy, science, and art; its folly, vice, misery, and unshaped fears—we should be enabled to enter, with the "word of life" as a word which is proven in our own deepest experience, and which is fashioning our own being; and in a sense most real, we should put forth the very power of Christ Himself.

We should likewise be guided in our investigations into Divine truth, and preserved from misleading things—as the spirit of sophistry, pride of heart, pride of intellect, pride of church, the blinding influence of cherished sin, and other similar causes of error; and we should be enabled to extend true aid to those who are unhappily involved in religious doubts and perplexities.

For the attaining of a life that secures such ends, let us joyfully remember that we are dependent on the Lord. He is the Vine, we are the branches. In our vital union to Him—as we abide in Him and He in us—lies our hope. Part of the means He employs for unfolding this life in us—and one of the richest parts—is the truth which He has disclosed to the Church through the disciple whom He loved. Therefore would I earnestly plead for the devout and loving study of these inspired writings, as well as of the life of the man to whom such grace was given.

Appendix.

LEGENDS, TRADITIONS, ETC.

NOTE.

NUMEROUS traditions and legends gather round the name of the Apostle John—some of them truth-like and with a probable foundation in fact; others wholly groundless and unworthy of credit. In this Appendix I give a few of the more notable by way of example. Many of them have a very monkish flavour, and are intrinsically worthless. They are kin to what Milton has in view when he speaks of whatsoever "time or the heedless hand of blind chance hath drawn down from of old to this present, in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea-weed, shells or shrubbs, unpickt, unchosen;" and they indicate what sort of New Testament we should have had, if we had been left to the mercy of those who gathered and preserved such stuff. A glance at them may teach us to be more thankful for the New Testament—from which they are sundered by a chasm so vast—and to take our "firm station" (as Milton puts it) in our "strong guards and places of safety under the tuition of Holy Writ."

J. C.

Legends, Traditions, etc.

A FAVOURITE mode of bringing saints to their providential destination, in legends, is by means of shipwreck. According to one legend, John is cast on the shores of Ephesus in this way, and arrives just in time to check the heresies that sprang up after the final departure of Paul. Another legend tells of the Apostles agreeing together, before they parted to evangelize the world, on the symbol which they should teach in common—namely, what is now called "the Apostles' Creed," a clause being composed by each of the Twelve separately. John was detained at Jerusalem for a time in charge of the Lord's mother; and after her death he bent his steps eastward to the Euphrates, to preach among the Parthians. Among them he laboured for a time, but finally he was led to Asia Minor, and came to Ephesus about the year 65.

The "*History of John the Son of Zebedee, Apostle and Evangelist*," * tells with much minute and often grotesque detail, how, after the Lord's ascension, the Apostles being full of the spirit of holiness, conferred together about preaching the Gospel among all nations, and then went forth to such countries

* *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.* Edited, from Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum and other Libraries, by W. Wright, LL.D., Ph. D.

and regions as they were charged by the grace of God. John was led to the country of the Ephesians, where the head and power of idolatry were dominant. On his arrival he hired himself to a bath-keeper named Secundus, and fetched fagots for those who kindled the bath. After a time he spoke to Secundus about his Master in heaven, and gave an account of Him on to His ascension into heaven, so that Secundus became a believer. After this the Apostle was appointed to receive the incomings of the bath, and to have charge of it.

A wonderful story is told, how Menelaus, son of the procurator, sinning in spite of rebuke, was smitten by the angel of the Lord, at the word of the holy man, and died on the spot. At the command of the procurator, they seized John and stript him, to see what he had on; and when they had taken off his coat and worn-out shirt, they found a cross of wood suspended from his neck, which had four tongues of fire, and burned the hands of those who came near it. A great crowd being gathered together, with outcry and tumult, John begged the procurator to bid the crowd be silent, and then in the name of Jesus the Messiah he restored the young man to life. The consequence was that a great multitude believed, to the number of thirty-six thousand seven hundred and six. The very same night a baptistery was made in the theatre, twelve cubits in length, twelve cubits in breadth, and two-and-a-half cubits deep, and amidst many marvels, with angels present, and outspreading their wings, the procurator was baptized first, and then the nobles, and then the whole crowd, from the eighth hour of the night until the sun rose; and when it was morning they brought their children, and the holy man gave them baptism till the fifth hour. An equally marvellous story is told of the conversion and baptism of the priesthood of Artemis.

When Nero, the wicked king, heard of these things, he laid hold of John, drove him into exile, and passed sentence on the city that it should be laid waste. Believing men took counsel, and collected money, that John might be set at liberty, and sent ten men with it by ship to Rome. When they entered the city, the Lord sent an angel to Nero in a flame of fire, and bearing a sword, who smote the wicked king and took away

his speech, so that he could only howl like a dog, and commanded him to send back to Ephesus the man whom he had cast into exile. Nero wrote an order accordingly, and they took the Apostle back, and he dwelt in a hut above the city.

After a long time, when the Apostles had planted the cross over the four quarters of the world, Peter and Paul came to Ephesus to see John. They entered Ephesus on a Monday, and for five days they continued persuading him to compose a Gospel, as had been done by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. On the Sunday, at night, at the time when our Lord arose from the grave, the Apostles slumbered and slept; but at that glorious time of the resurrection the Spirit of holiness descended, and the whole place was in a flame, and those who were awake awakened their fellows. Then John took paper and wrote his Gospel in one hour, and delivered it to Paul and Peter; and when the sun arose they went down to the house of prayer, and read it before the whole city, and prayed, and partook of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. And the holy man sat in the hut summer and winter, until he was a hundred and twenty years of age, and there his Master buried him in that place, as Moses was buried on Mount Nebo. So much for the "History of John. the son of Zebedee, Apostle and Evangelist."

Among the sacred objects exhibited on great occasions in the church of S. Croce at Rome, is the cup in which the Apostle by command of Domitian the Emperor drank poison without receiving hurt; which being afterwards tasted by his attendants, they instantly fell down dead. Of this legend there are several versions.

Tertullian, who is rather apt to credit the marvellous, assuming the imprisonment of John at Rome in the time of Domitian, records a tradition to the effect that he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil, which had no power to hurt him. "Happy church" (of Rome), he exclaims, "to whom the Apostles poured forth their full teaching with their blood; where Peter is made equal in suffering to his Lord (*i. e.*, is crucified); where Paul is crowned with a death like the Baptist's; where the Apostle John, after

being plunged into boiling oil, came forth unhurt, and was banished to the island." A fragment, wrongly ascribed to Polycarp, repeats the legend, "that the blessed John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil for the name of Christ." Jerome, founding on Tertullian, gives it at still greater length: "It is questioned in what manner the sons of Zebedee, James and John, drank the cup of martyrdom, when Scripture narrates the death of James only, beheaded by command of Herod, while John ended his days by a natural death. But if we read ecclesiastical histories, in which it is reported that he also was cast for martyrdom into a caldron of boiling oil, and then went forth an athlete to receive the crown of Christ, being immediately banished to the isle of Patmos, we shall see that in spirit he too failed not of martyrdom, and that he drank the cup of confession which the three young men in the fiery furnace also drank, although the persecutor did not shed his blood." In another passage, he makes this addition to the story, that the Apostle "came forth more sound and vigorous than when he was thrown in."

Another tradition (varying according to the teller) records that the elders of the Asiatic churches were gathered together at Ephesus, solemnly fasting, and laid before the Apostle the three Gospels already written, desiring to have his judgment respecting them. He said that the three Evangelists had written the truth, but that some things were omitted. He said also that it was necessary to speak of the Lord's divinity, lest some afterwards should deny it, thinking that He came only in the flesh. Then the elders requested that he would record those things which had been omitted by the others, and which he deemed of chiefest importance, which accordingly he did, breaking out, as if by sudden inspiration, with the utterance, "In the beginning was the Word," and so giving forth the Gospel which goes under his name.

In the "*Travels of S. John in Patmos*," professing to be written by one of his pupils named Prochorus, a different account is presented. The place of composition is not Ephesus, but Patmos, at a spot called *The Repose*, which is still held sacred. There the master is found by the pupil standing in prayer and

rapt as in ecstasy. He bids Prochorus take pen and paper; the mountain is shaken by a flash of lightning and a peal of thunder; and then he dictates the whole Gospel from first to last to Prochorus, who writes sitting at his feet.*

Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus in the close of the second century, says that the Apostle carried a plate of gold on his forehead, as priest of Jesus Christ. The allusion is to Exod. xxviii. 36–38: "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD; and thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be; and it shall be upon Aaron's forehead." The probability is that the words of Polycrates were simply metaphorical—as when we read of receiving a white stone or eating of the hidden manna; and if so, we must not think of the Apostle as being arrayed like the Jewish high-priest, but only of his being from age, character, and apostleship, the foremost among those who were made kings and priests unto God. A similar metaphor at a later time represents Christ's ministers as clothed "in the priestly garb of the Holy Ghost."

The well-known story of Cerinthus and the bath comes to us only at third hand. Irenæus records it on the authority of some who heard it from Polycarp, one of John's pupils. In a later edition of it (when dirt had become one of the badges of saintship), John's visit to the bath is represented as quite unusual—his general life being that of one "who used neither bath nor oil, and ate no animal food." The account given by Irenæus is, that the Apostle was one day entering the public bath at Ephesus, when he learned that the heretic Cerinthus was within. Immediately he sprang from the place, without having used the bath, exclaiming, "Let us flee, lest the house fall upon us, since

* When an attempt was made under the Emperor Julian to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, as the workmen were busy at the foundations, they lifted (it is said) a stone which covered the mouth of a cave, cut out square in the rock. On a pillar lay a book wrapt in clean fine linen, which being opened proved to be the Gospel of John, the first words writ large so as to attract attention—"*In the beginning was the Word.*" We are indebted for this legend to Philostorgius.

Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within." Jeremy Taylor pronounces this a good precedent for us, when the case is equal. St. John could discern the spirit of Cerinthus, whose heresy was fundamental, and the Apostle was a person assisted up to infallibility. "And possibly," he adds, "it was done by the whisper of a prophetic spirit and upon a miraculous design; *for immediately upon his retreat the bath fell down, and crushed Cerinthus in the ruins.*" More to the point is the bishop's counsel, that we should not quickly, nor upon slight grounds, nor unworthy instances, call heretic.

Two young men (another story runs), had sold all their possessions, to cast in their lot with the Apostle, but afterwards repented. Knowing their thoughts, he sent them to gather pebbles and faggots, which on their return he changed into golden ingots, saying to them, "Take back your riches and enjoy them on earth, since you regret having exchanged them for heaven."

A graceful little story is told by John Cassian,* a "hermit" of the fifth century, with no faculty of discrimination. Probably he picked it up from hearsay—as he introduces it with "*It is told.*" In his old age the Apostle used to find pleasure in the attachment of a bird which he had tamed—a partridge. One day, as he held it in his bosom and was gently stroking it, a huntsman suddenly approached, and wondering that one so illustrious should take to such a trivial amusement, he asked, "Art thou that John whose singular renown had inspired even me with a great desire to know thee? How then canst thou occupy thyself with an employment so humble?" The Apostle replied, "What is that in thy hand?" He answered, "A bow." "And why dost thou not always carry it bent?" "Because," he answered, "it would in that case lose its strength; and when it was necessary to shoot, it would fail from the too continuous strain." "Then let not this slight and brief relaxation of mine, O young man, perplex thee," answered the Apostle; "since without it the spirit would flag from the unremitted strain, and

* Collatio xxiv. chap. xxi., with a long note by the Benedictine Editor. The same story is told, with variations, about St. Anthony and many others.

fail when the call of duty came." One might add the well-known lines,—

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

We are indebted to Clement of Alexandria for the story of John and the young robber. It is to this effect.

Visiting a town not far from Ephesus, and assembling with the brethren, he saw in the audience a young man, tall of stature and of noble countenance and ardent spirit. Addressing the pastor of the Church, he said: "I commit that young man to thy charge, and call Christ and the Church to witness that I do so." The pastor of the Church undertook, and for a time faithfully fulfilled, the charge. He instructed the young man in the faith, and by-and-by had the joy of receiving him into the Church. Subsequently however he somewhat relaxed his watchfulness, as having set upon him the seal of the Lord. In the meantime idle and worthless acquaintances took advantage of circumstances to lead him into temptation. First they enticed him to their sumptuous banquets. Then they induced him to go out with them, in the dark, on errands of plunder. Finally they make him accustomed to iniquity; and having started from the right way, like a powerful and hard-mouthed horse that seizes the bit between its teeth, he was hurried into evil all the more violently through the energy of his nature. At length, believing salvation hopeless, he fully surrendered himself to evil, and became one of a company of brigands, of whom he was made the chief, being the most violent and fierce of all.

Some time after this, John revisited the city on some pressing emergency. When the special business was concluded, for which he had undertaken the journey, he turned to the pastor of the Church and said, "Restore me now the pledge which I with the Saviour entrusted to your charge in the presence of the Church." And when he saw that his words were not understood, he added, "I reclaim the young man whose soul I entrusted to thee." The pastor said, with tears, "He is dead." "How?" asked the Apostle: "what death did he die?" "He is dead to

God," was the answer; "for he has become evil and reprobate; he was forced to flee for his crimes, and he is now a brigand among our mountains."

Immediately the Apostle, obtaining a horse and guide, rode off even as he was to the robber hold, and falling into the hands of the sentinels, required to be led at once to their chief. But when John was led into his presence, he at once fled, overwhelmed with shame. John, forgetting his years, ran after him, calling him to stay, and exclaiming, "My son, why dost thou flee from thy father? I am feeble and advanced in age; have pity on me, my son; fear not. There is yet hope of salvation for thee. I will stand for thee before the Lord Christ. If need be, I will gladly die for thee, as He died for us. Stay; believe; it is Christ who has sent me."

The young man stood still, with eyes bent to the earth; then flung away the weapons with which he was armed; then trembled and wept; then threw himself into the embrace of the aged saint, and implored his pardon. The Apostle raised him up; assured him of forgiveness; prayed and fasted with him; and did not desist till he had fully restored him to the Church, a glorious testimony to the new birth, and a token of the hoped-for resurrection.

The story is at least in keeping with the social conditions which then existed, and is one of the most admirable illustrations to be met with of a shepherd going after the lost sheep until he finds it.

In his extreme old age, with every faculty becoming numb, when he could no longer walk to the place of Christian assembly, he caused himself to be borne thither, that he might address the brethren; and this was his whole address—"*Little children, love one another.*" The disciples and brethren, hearing nothing but this from him, asked him why he always spoke the same thing to them, and nothing else; to which he replied, *That it was the command of the Lord, and that if this only were done, enough was done.* The story is not unworthy the name of him who reported the charge of Jesus, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another;" and who so largely taught "We

have known and believed the love which God hath to us: God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

Many legends sprang up in course of time respecting his death. An "*Account of the Decease of S. John, Apostle and Evangelist*," * tells that on a Sunday, when the brethren were assembled, he addressed them, and then prayed and broke bread with thanksgiving, and stretched out his hand to them, praying for every man. Then he said to Byrrhus, "Take with thee two brethren, who have with them baskets and spades, and come after me;" and so Byrrhus did. John then walked forth, dismissing many from attending him, and came to the grave of a certain Christian brother, and said to the youths, "Dig, my sons;" and as they digged, he urged them, saying, "Let the trench be deep." Then he went on conversing and edifying those who were present, speaking to them of the majesty of the Messiah, and praying over each of them. When the trench was finished, he suddenly stripped off the garments which he wore, and cast them like bed-clothes into the bottom of the trench; and standing in his mantle only, he lifted up his hands and prayed to God, in many words—somewhat rhetorical—"Receive the soul of Thy John." Then he turned to the east and glorified God, standing full in the light, and said, "Be Thou with me, Jesus the Messiah our Lord." Then he went down into the trench, where he had spread his clothes, and saying, "Concord and peace be with you, my brethren," he rendered up his spirit, rejoicing.

During his life-time the saying went abroad among the brethren (claiming to rest on the express word of Jesus) that he was not to die, but to form one of the company who "are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." If we bear in mind that many of the early Christians expected the world to end with that very generation, the currency of the "saying," will not appear extraordinary. Even his actual passing away, however, did not suffice to eradicate the belief that had sprung up. Wild assertions in course of time were hazarded; such as, that

* *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*. Edited by Dr. William Wright.

his remains, though sought for, could not be found. Augustine tells of persons in his day who professed to have witnessed the gentle heaving of the turf where he lay, asleep, but not dead, at Ephesus. The notion that he was still alive became almost an article of popular faith in the middle ages (not unlike the legend of the Wandering Jew), and in some quarters lingered even later. The English sect of "*Seekers*," under Cromwell, expected his reappearance as the forerunner of Christ's glorious return. A trace of the notion is still partially visible in the Feast of the Translation of the Body of S. John, observed in the Greek Church. Beza tells of an impostor of his times, burned at Toulouse, who gave himself out to be the Apostle.

A specimen of a different class of legends is found in the *Chronicle of John of Brompton*. King Edward the Confessor had, after Christ and the Virgin Mary, a special veneration for S. John the Evangelist. One day, returning from his church at Westminster, he was accosted by a pilgrim, who asked of him an alms for the love of God and S. John. The king, who was ever merciful to the poor, immediately drew from his finger a ring, and, unknown to any one, gave it to the beggar. When the king had reigned twenty-four years, it came to pass that two Englishmen, pilgrims, returning to their own country from the Holy Land, were met by one in the habit of a pilgrim, who asked of them concerning their country: and being told they were of England, he said unto them, "When ye shall have arrived in your own country, go to King Edward, and salute him in my name: say to him that I thank him for the alms which he bestowed on me in a certain street in Westminster; for there, on a certain day, as I begged of him an alms, he bestowed on me this ring, which till now I have preserved, and ye shall carry it back to him, saying that in six months from this time he shall quit the world and come and remain with me for ever." The pilgrims, being astounded, said, "Who art thou? and where is thy dwelling?" And he answered, saying, "I am John the Evangelist. Edward your king is my friend, and for the sanctity of his life I hold him dear. Go now therefore, deliver to him this message and this ring, and I will pray to God

that ye may arrive safely in your country." When S. John had spoken, he delivered them the ring, and then vanished out of their sight. The pilgrims, praising and thanking God for this glorious vision, went on their journey; and being arrived in England, they repaired to King Edward, and saluted him, and delivered the ring and the message, relating all truly. And the king received the tidings joyfully and feasted the messengers royally. Then he set himself to prepare for his departure out of this world. On the eve of the nativity 1066, he fell sick, and on the eve of the Epiphany following he died. The ring he gave to the Abbot of Westminster to be for ever preserved among the relics there.*

Three names are traditionally linked to John's as those of pupils. The first is that of *Ignatius*:—"the disciple of John the Apostle," he is called in the "*Martyrdom of Ignatius*," "and a man in all respects of apostolic character." It is probably he whom Lucian pillories in his *Peregrinus*. Tradition makes him out to have been the little child whom Jesus set as an example of humility amidst the twelve Apostles. Hence he was supposed to derive his name of Theophorus—Ignatius who is called Theophorus—the "God-carried;" though he himself interprets it to mean one who carries God in his heart. He was overseer of the Church of Syrian Antioch, and is said to have suffered martyrdom under Trajan, at Rome, by being thrown to the lions. A large number of writings have been attributed to him, respecting which there has been more controversy than about any ancient Christian writings, if we except the New Testament itself. Probably not more than three of the whole number are his, and even these interpolated. In whatever form—the longer or the shorter—they are examined, they will be found to contain opinions and exhibit modes of thought entirely unknown to the age to which they are attributed.† Though called a pupil of John, he had but slight mental sympathy with him, and his writings rather bear the Pauline stamp.

---

* Mrs. JAMESON'S *Sacred and Legendary Art.*

† Dr. JAMES DONALDSON: *Critical History of Christian Literature and Doctrine.*

"His three epistles," says De Pressensé, "are the farewells of a Christian hero. It is clear they were written in haste, by a man who desired to put all his Christianity in the few words hurriedly penned, in moments when the vigilance of his fierce jailers was relaxed. A strange fire flashes from those broken words, as from fretted flints."

Perhaps the most interesting of these epistles is that to the Romans, which he forwarded, as he was proceeding to Rome for his martyrdom, by some friends who were taking a shorter route. Thinking it not unlikely that his brethren at Rome might intercede for his life, he earnestly urged them not to make the attempt. "Pray do not seek to confer any greater favour upon me than that I be sacrificed to God. . . . . Only request in my behalf both inward and outward strength, that I may not only speak but will. . . . . I shall die willingly for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will toward me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. . . . . Now I begin to be a disciple. And let no one, of things visible or invisible, envy me that I should attain to Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the crowds of wild beasts, let tearings, breakings and dislocations of bones, let cutting-off of members, let shatterings of the whole body, let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me—only let me attain to Jesus Christ."

At length (according to *The Martyrdom of Ignatius*), he reached the shores of Italy, and was hurried on to Rome, just in time for the last day of the games during the Saturnalia. Kneeling down he entreated the Son of God in behalf of the churches, that brotherly love might continue, and that persecution might cease; and then immediately was thrown to the wild beasts and devoured.

The second name is *Polycarp*. Irenæus, who sat at his feet, informs us that he "was instructed by the Apostles, and was brought into contact with many who had seen Christ." In a letter to Florinus, Irenæus says: "While I was yet a boy, I saw you in Lower Asia with Polycarp, pursuing a brilliant

career in the royal court, and trying to be well-pleasing to him. For I remember the occurrences of those days better than the more recent (for instructions which we receive in childhood grow with our soul and become one with it); so that I can tell even the spot in which the blessed Polycarp sat and conversed, and his outgoings and incomings, and the character of his life, and the form of his body, and the conversations which he held with the multitude; and how he related his familiar intercourse with John and the rest who had seen the Lord; and how he rehearsed their sayings and what things they were which he had heard from them with regard to the Lord and His miracles and teaching. All these things Polycarp related in harmony with the writings, as having received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of life." We learn from Irenæus further that Polycarp was an overseer in the Church at Smyrna by apostolic appointment.

A short "*Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*" still survives, which, although poor in thought, breathes a simple and noble Christian spirit.

A letter professing to have been written by the Church at Smyrna to the Church at Philomelium—but which cannot be trusted in consequence of interpolations, additions, and internal improbabilities—gives an exceedingly interesting and graphic account of Polycarp's martyrdom. When called to swear by the fortune of Cæsar and reproach Christ, that he might save his life, he replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me an injury: how can I blaspheme Him, my King and my Saviour?" From amidst the flames that consumed him he gave thanks, "because Thou hast counted me worthy to have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of Thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost."

The third name is that of *Papias*, an overseer in the Church at Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia, the birthplace of Epictetus, the famous Stoic philosopher. Irenæus speaks of him as an "ancient man," "a hearer of John," and "a companion of Polycarp."

He was on terms of intercourse with many who had known the Lord and His Apostles. From them he gathered information which he wove into Five Books, entitled an *Exposition of the Lord's Sayings*—a work which has not come down to us, except some fragments preserved in Eusebius and elsewhere.* He seems to have been a man of small mind, a great reader, but a poor thinker. It is to him that the report is traced back that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, and that Mark, in his Gospel, was the mouthpiece of Peter. He too is said to have suffered martyrdom about the same time with Polycarp.

---

* Dr. Donaldson (*Crit. Hist.*) suggests that perhaps this work of Papias may yet be recovered ; for some writing under the name of Papias is mentioned thrice in the catalogue of the library of the Benedictine Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury, contained in a Cottonian MS. written in the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century ; and, according to Menard, the words, " I found the book of Papias on the Words of the Lord," are contained in an inventory of the property of the Church of Nismes, prepared about 1218.

London : Morgan & Scott, 12, Paternoster Buildings.

ALSO BY DR. CULROSS.

SUPERIOR EDITION, cloth, 2s. 6d.

CHEAP EDITION, tinted covers, 1s.; cloth, 1s. 6d.

"Behold, I Stand at the Door, and Knock":

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO LAODICEA.

"All who admire Dr. CULROSS's insight, his delicacy of perception, his curious felicity of language, his broad and tender sympathies, his grasp of great truths, will welcome this volume."—*The Freeman.*

"This most acceptable book from the fecund brain and heart of Dr. CULROSS. . . . Altogether, this is a book that, being worth reading and re-reading, is *worth-buying.* It is well-timed. It is at once suggestive and full. *O si sic omnes!*"—*United Presbyterian Magazine.*

"With deep spiritual insight, tenderness of feeling, and practical unction, Dr. CULROSS expounds the word given in the Epistle to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans. . . . A book that throbs with spiritual life and tenderest love from the first line to the last."—*Literary World.*

"Another 'gem of purest ray serene' from the deep waters of our brother's teeming mind. Above all living teachers we prefer Dr. CULROSS. . . . He possesses a ripeness of thought and beauty of expression which, in our judgment, are scarcely equalled, and not in one instance surpassed, by those of any other living teacher known to us."

The Sword and the Trowel.

"Would that every professing Christian would thoughtfully and prayerfully peruse it!"—*The Hive.*

"The book is full of the most vital and important truths, which are expressed in language chaste and elegant, and with a most practical purpose. The work should have a large circulation."—*Christian Age.*

LONDON:
MORGAN & SCOTT, 12, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.
And may be ordered of any Bookseller.

ALSO BY DR. CULROSS.

Printed on toned paper, cloth extra, 2s. 6d.

"Thy First Love":

CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO EPHESUS.

"In seven chapters Dr. CULROSS gives an exposition of the Letter to Ephesus—full of thoughtful and eloquent teaching; gemmed with illustration, such as is his alone; and laying hold of the heart and the understanding also."
Penuel.

"This admirable work, as its title implies, is a series of sermons on the Epistle to the Church at Ephesus. As usual Dr. CULROSS is clear and simple in his exposition, and more than ordinarily forceful and impressive in his application of spiritual truth."—*The Methodist.*

"A new work, from the pen of Dr. CULROSS, needs no recommendation. Spirituality and faithful discrimination, gospel warmth and tenderness, characterize this, like all he writes; while the glow, as from a golden sunset, which his imagination sheds over his style, gives it a great charm."
British Messenger.

Neatly printed and attractively bound in tinted covers, suitable for giving away, price 2d.

Fellow-Helpers to the Truth.

AN ADDRESS TO SABBATH-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

"A true teacher brings out to the children the Word of the Lord . . . himself learns the lessons he tries to teach . . . aims at the conversion of the children and the nurture of youthful piety . . . feels himself to be God's instrument."—*Extract.*

Neatly printed and attractively bound in tinted covers, suitable for giving away, price 2d.

Home Duties and Home Influences.

AN ADDRESS TO MOTHERS.

"What a marvel of Divine wisdom and loving-kindness the DOMESTIC CONSTITUTION is! How wonderfully and how graciously God has bound us together! I believe there are few things that bring out more clearly what is in the heart of God."—*Extract.*

THIRTEENTH THOUSAND.

Neatly printed on tinted paper, suitable for enclosing in Letters, price 1s. per dozen.

Amusements: from the Christian Point of View.

"Life will not be less earnest and solemn to us, or less full of glorious purpose, nor will God's love be less the joy of our hearts, that we have our seasons of innocent and healthful recreation."—*Extract.*

LONDON: MORGAN & SCOTT, 12, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

And may be ordered of any Bookseller.

WORKS PUBLISHED BY

MORGAN AND SCOTT.

Calls to Christ.

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES. By Rev. W. R. NICOLL, M.A. In tinted covers, 1s.; cloth, 1s. 6d.

"The Gospel scheme of salvation is fully set forth, and is pointedly enforced. It is a book which might with much profit be placed in the hands of the careless and unconcerned."—*The Record.*

Revival and Revival Work.

A Record of the Labours of Messrs. Moody and Sankey in England, Ireland, and Scotland. By Rev. J. MACPHERSON, Author of "Life and Labours of Duncan Matheson." 314 pp.

Special Cheap Edition, tinted covers, 1s. 6d.; cloth neat, 2s. 6d.

AN APPROPRIATE GIFT FOR MINISTERS, EVANGELISTS, SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS, & OTHERS ENGAGED IN CHRISTIAN WORK.

The Superior Edition, in bevelled boards, price 4s. 6d., is still on sale.

REVIEW from "THE KING'S HIGHWAY" of November, 1876.

"Many, in these days of quickened religious earnestness, are found in the class of 'Christian Workers,' and to all such we want to commend a work full of clear teaching on the plan of salvation, and of fresh, well-told incident. We have found its illustrations of great service, and feel sure that many of our readers who are teachers and preachers will be the better for possessing 'REVIVAL AND REVIVAL WORK.' It is by no means an ephemeral production, but a book of facts and principles, written with great ability, and glowing with Christian zeal."

Life and Labours of Duncan Matheson.

The Scottish Evangelist.

By Rev. J. MACPHERSON, Author of "The Christian Hero." **New and Cheap Edition**, Complete and Unabridged, with Striking Portrait. In tinted covers, 1s. 6d.; cloth neat, 2s. 6d. One of the best of Books for putting into the hands of Young Men.

"The life of a real man, consecrated in life, and full of zeal for the Lord. This biography will not only interest, but benefit a wide circle of readers. We had the happiness of frequent correspondence with Duncan Matheson. We valued him as a successful soul-winner."—*The Sword and the Trowel.*

"A wonderful life-history. But the book must be read and re-read to be fully enjoyed."—*Edinburgh Daily Review.*

LONDON: MORGAN & SCOTT, 12, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.
And may be ordered of any Bookseller.

The Gift of God.

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES. By PASTOR THEODORE MONOD.
Tinted covers, 1s. ; neat cloth boards, 1s. 6d.

"A very choice little volume. We trust Mr. Monod's words may bring joy to many a craving heart."—*Woman's Work in the Harvest Field.*

"These Addresses are clear as a sunbeam and full of spiritual force. Our counsel is—By all means get the book."—*The King's Highway.*

Christ and the Scriptures.

By Rev. ADOLPH SAPHIR, B.A. **Best Edition**, cloth, 3s. ; cloth, gilt edges, 3s. 6d. **Cheap Edition**, tinted covers, 1s. ; cloth, 1s. 6d.

"Those in our churches who are advanced in the spiritual life, will find here meat for strong men, and bones which will need to be broken before the marrow can be enjoyed."—*Sword and Trowel.*

"It is a book emphatically of the living Christ; a claim that the Bible is only a book of power as the living Christ is in it. To all disciples of Jesus, this work commends itself at once by its grasp of truth, its insight, its profound simplicity, the life which is in it, and its spiritual force."—*Christian Work.*

Pentecost:

OR, THE REVIVAL OF THE WORK OF GOD.

By Rev. G. WILKINSON. **New and Improved Issue**, limp cloth, 1s. 6d.

To this Book the Hundred Guinea Prize was awarded.

"However can it be that this most excellent work is only in its third thousand? We remember reading it about ten years ago, and we shall never forget the impression it made upon our mind. A few weeks since we wanted a copy for a special purpose, and on purchasing it we were sorry and amazed to learn that it had not yet realized a sale of three thousand copies. As our special aim is to promote a true revival of religion, we draw special attention to this book. It is in every sense a most able and useful book, decidedly the best on the subject of revivals that we are acquainted with. If any of our readers wish to promote a genuine revival in their churches, they would do well to circulate a few copies of this most judicious, spiritual, and stimulating work."

Christian Era.

LONDON: MORGAN & SCOTT, 12, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.
And may be ordered of any Bookseller.

41

DATE DUE

JUN [redacted] 1995

Demco, Inc. 38-293

BS2455 .C96
John, whom Jesus loved.
Princeton Theological Seminary–Speer Library
1 1012 00080 9881